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CATHARINE II. AND THE HOLY SEE (1772-1796).

**A**MONG the crowned heads of the eighteenth century none was more inimical to the Holy See than Catharine II. of Russia. Other sovereigns, Catholic and Protestant, held up to the lips of the Papacy the bitter chalice of persecution and humiliation; it was reserved for the autocrat of all the Russias to compel the Popes to drink it to the dregs. Not even the hydra-headed Revolution of the doctrinaires and Jacobins of France did so much damage to Catholic interests as this woman by her dealings with the Polish nation, the Holy See, and the Roman Catholic populations that she annexed during the last twenty years of her reign. Elsewhere in Europe the views of Gallicanism and Febronianism have been to a considerable extent counteracted and weakened; the ruins of the Reign of Terror have been partially cleared away. But the work of Catharine of Russia was done with thoroughness—not only were the immediate results of enormous importance, but all hope of restoration was shut out by her iron Byzantinism, her unparalleled cunning, and the new secularism of her policy and her measures. She robbed the Roman Catholic Church of more millions of souls than ever were in Ireland in the days of its greatest population, and she built up between them and Rome a Chinese Wall of exclusion that stands to-day, a sign and earnest of

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the actual commercial and political intentions of the vast State, whose second founder she truly was. What was this woman like?

## I.

Catharine was the daughter of a little German Prince, Christian of Anhalt-Zerbst. She had been brought up in ignorance and was married at 16 to the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, who became Emperor of Russia (Peter III.) at the death of his aunt, the debauchee-Empress Elizabeth (1762), youngest daughter of Peter the Great<sup>1</sup>. Her married life was unhappy enough, for the Emperor was an ugly, consumptive and bibulous creature, unpopular in Russia, and to her every way unsympathetic. One day (1762) she usurped his throne and caused him to be murdered. Not long after she had the pretender, Iwan VI. (son of Empress Anna, 1730-1740), barbarously put to death, after he had spent most of his sad, young life in prison. Thus opened the career of a woman who lived to affect profoundly her own State and her subjects, and to transmit to her successors an anti-Catholic religious policy that has never been abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

The lives of other Russian Empresses of the eighteenth century had been such as to make Elizabeth of England appear like a model of correctness, and to justify the work of John Knox, "Against the Monstrous Regiment of Woman" (1557). But Catharine II. surpassed all limits of decency and has left to posterity the example of the grossest personal immorality in the highest station a woman could occupy. Her paramours were State officials, treated after the fashion of the mistresses of Louis XIV., with special provision and residence—the famous "Appartement." They were often the real governors of Russia. The Orloffs and the Potemkins, and all the minor and later lovers of this great ex-Lutheran dame, were like Viceroyes in the State, and often affected in public an Oriental splendor. It is said that she squandered on these men fully eighty millions of dollars—to Potemkin she allowed not only an unhampered authority, but one-third of the revenues of all Southern Russia. Her Prime Ministers, like Panine and Bezborodko, were dissolute gamblers and indolent libertines.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Du Bouzet, "La Jeunesse de Catherine II.," Paris, 1860. Rambaud, "Catharine II. dans sa famille," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Feb., 1874.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire has this to say of the death of Peter III.: "On parle d'une collique violente qui a delivré Pierre Ulric du petit désagrément d'avoir perdu un empire de deux mille lieues. . . . J'avoue que je crains d'avoir le cœur assez corrompu pour n'être pas aussi scandalisé de cette scène qu'un bon chrétien devrait l'être. Il peut resulter un très grand bien de ce petit mal . . . et d'ailleurs quand un Ivrogne meurt de la collique, cela nous apprend à être sobres." Nourisson, *Voltaire et le Voltairanisme*, p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> De Vêrac, the French ambassador, wrote: "Quand on est témoin de la

Much has been written of her efforts to renovate Russia—there was certainly a vast field for her labors. We do not need to deny the improvement of roads and communication, the attempts to colonize and improve Southern Russia and to create cities and centres of commerce, her interest in French letters and the fine arts as represented by the French scholars, architects, painters and sculptors she employed. St. Petersburg is really a creation of French genius. She imitated as far as possible the French Academy and Madame de Maintenon's school of St. Cyr. In a huge educational establishment built at Moscow she educated many thousands of young Russians, somewhat on the plan of Alexander when he educated the thirty thousand young Persians in his brand-new Greek schools, that they might forget to love their fatherland and adore the conqueror. It is true that she succeeded, superficially, in changing an Asiatic into an European power.

On the other hand, she permitted the great majority of her subjects to live in abject misery through fear of her own powerful nobility and wealthy subjects. Her famous "Instruction pour la confection d'un nouveau code," all filled with plagiarisms from the humanitarian writings of Montesquieu and Beccaria, was held to be a huge joke and a comedy by foreign observers at her court. The great meeting of 652 deputies at Moscow, representing every Russian estate and interest, except the bulk of the unhappy serfs, recalls the late meeting of the Zemstvos at St. Petersburg. It ended only in riveting more tightly the chains of the popular slavery. What that was like may be learned from the story of Daria Soltykof and her serfs (*Lavisse-Rimbaud*, VII., 440). The poor man in her vast domains had security, for she almost never interfered with the rights of the proprietors, and herself increased the number of unprotected serfs by donating many thousands of crown-serfs to her discarded lovers, who thenceforth treated them as private property.

The population of Russia remained ignorant and abandoned, while she corresponded with Voltaire and Diderot<sup>4</sup> and wrote "comédies de mœurs" or indulged her violent passions.<sup>5</sup> The stupid

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vie dissipée à laquelle ils se livrent l'étonnement n'est pas que les affaires se fassent mal: l'étonnement est qu'elles se fassent, *Lavisse-Rimbaud*, "Histoire Générale" (Paris, 1896), VII., 437.

<sup>4</sup> Pingaud, *Les Français en Russie*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 15, 1900. For the correspondence of Catharine with Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Falconet and others, cf. *Rimbaud*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March, 1877.

<sup>5</sup> A Russian writer, M. Bilbassof, began not long ago a complete history of Catharine II. The first volume (in Russian) appeared in 1890, whereupon it was forbidden in Russia—so scandalous is yet at St. Petersburg the true history of "Sainte Catherine." It was then translated into German, and, with the second volume, was published at Berlin in 1892. Cf.

ignorance of her people was made evident when they slaughtered the Archbishop of Moscow because he interfered with their superstitious conduct during the awful pest that decimated that city in the summer of 1771. Her reign was characterized by many savage "jacqueries" of the misguided multitudes who followed after every impostor like Pougatchef, in the vain hope that Peter III. had come to life again and would relieve their miseries. Her political reforms were superficial and worthless, for she could not affect the true source of the universal robbery and corruption—the characters of the men to whom all Russian interests, civil, military and naval, were confided. Her own household was an open pestilential source of immorality in all its most glaring and scandalous forms. Her boasted civilization was only a thin veneer that revealed easily the fierce untutored barbarism which it was meant to hide and not transform. Under the hypocritical pretext of reforming her own church she confiscated the lands and revenues of the monastic corporations, only to waste this wealth on her lovers, on unmeaning and unsuitable attempts at the improvement of Russian life among those already comfortable. She had forever in her mouth the words of tolerance, humanity, equality, religious liberty, and was nevertheless the most intolerant and oppressive of all rulers. Such a woman could have existed only in the Russia of the eighteenth century, and only in a land where all ecclesiastical spirit and liberty had long since been seared as with a hot iron and the mouths of the clergy made dumb with fright or stopped with secular gifts and advantages. It was to this woman and her officials, civil and ecclesiastic, that the helpless Roman Catholics of Poland were turned over between 1772 and 1796. What she did to them and what obstacles she put in the way of the reunion of Christendom, and the spiritual elevation of the Russian people themselves, is a chapter of history that needs to be pondered carefully if we would understand the relations between Russia and the Holy See in the century that has closed.<sup>6</sup>

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M. K. Wallaszewski, "Le Roman d'une Impératrice, Catherine II. de Russie, d'après ses mémoires, sa correspondance et les documents inédits des archives d'Etat," Paris, 1893, 80. This work contains quite curious details concerning her private and public life. Cf. Nourrisson, *op. cit.* p. 351. The same author has also written another work on the court and surroundings of Catharine, "Autour d'un Trône," Paris, 1894.

<sup>6</sup> Many papers and documents of the reign of Catharine, in their original text, as well as much of her correspondence, may be found in the volumes of the very extensive Russian "Collection de la Société Impériale;" other materials are in the great (Russian) work known as "Old and New Russia." The published legislation of Catharine is found in the "Collection complète des Lois Russes" (40 vols.). The treaties of her reign are in the second volume of Martens' "Recueil des traités, conventions," etc. There exist a great many curious and valuable memoirs of her reign, both in Russian and

## II.

Three points are worthy of note in the dealings of Catharine with Catholic Poland—her promises to Europe in general, her promises to Poland and the measure of execution she gave to her promises and her treaties. Before the Europe of her time she poses as the protectress of her oppressed co-religionists and of all the dissidents in Poland. She laments publicly their unhappy condition, and poses as a magnanimous Princess defending in the name of outraged conscience and broken treaties the natural liberty and equality of the human race. The “bonheur du genre humain” is so dear to her that she is ready to take up arms to extend it to all men. As to the integrity of Poland, sorely threatened by the constant interference of Russia, she asseverates most solemnly (June 9, 1764) that she has no designs upon the territory of Poland; rather will she return all that belonged to that kingdom by the treaty of Moscow (1686), and thenceforth defend and protect its just and legitimate possessions. When she wrote these words she had already signed a treaty with Frederick the Great, on March 3 (April 11), 1764, in which both agreed to maintain the frightful internal anarchy of Poland and to prevent any consolidation of the royal authority. After the election of her puppet candidate and former lover, Stanislaus Poniatowski (August 7, 1764), she began anew her intrigues against the peace and welfare of this sorely troubled nation.

It is well to remember that at this time Poland was substantially a Catholic land. Of its eighteen million souls (Les-coeur), only four millions were dissident (Russian and Protestant) and two millions were Jews and Musselmans. The constitution recognized the Catholic religion as the State religion. The Protestants and the Orthodox had full liberty of worship, though they were not allowed for evident reasons to exercise public functions. Catharine covered her first attacks with the approval and coöperation of the Protestant courts of England, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, which chivalrously demanded for the Polish dissidents rights and privileges that they did not allow to their own Roman Catholic subjects—all this in the name of “the happiness of the human race” and of the humanitarian principles of the encyclopedists. By misrepresentations on the part of her ecclesiastical agents, by intrigues and acts of violence on the part of her

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in Western languages, *e. g.*, the memoirs of De Ségur (Paris, 1824-1859), and Algarotti, “*Letres sur la Russie*,” Paris, 1769. Formal histories of her reign have been written by Tooke (in English), Lectercq, Soumarakof, Lefort, Jauffret (Paris, 1860), Sotovief (vols. XXV.-XXIX. of his *Russian History*, Moscow, 1875-1879) and Brückner, in the Oncken collection, Berlin, 1883.

civil representatives, by lying promises and assurances of her own "coeur de mère," and with the unjust complicity of the northern Protestant courts, she attempted to force from the Polish Diet and Crown what she called "the sacred rights of the dissidents." This meant in the circumstances of the time a hopeless continuation and increase of the political anarchy that had been prevalent in Poland for centuries. That it was not an honest zeal for religious equality on the part of Catharine or the northern courts is evident from the fact that their Roman Catholic subjects continued to groan under all the disabilities of the past. We have only to recall the legal conditions of the great majority of the Irish people in the time of Catharine, both as to Church and State. As a matter of fact, says Lescoeur (pp. 1-2), the kingdom of Poland was at this period "the only nation in which the dissidents (from the national church) had full and complete liberty of belief and worship." Certainly the Protestant kingdoms of Europe were at this time in open contradiction with their own constitutional principles and administrative praxis when they undertook to impose on Poland what was practically a new constitution, while they forbade her at the same time to remedy the mortal defects of the older one.<sup>7</sup>

The year 1764 is a fatal one in the 'annals of Poland. It marks the election of her last King under circumstances of extraordinary humiliation, the secret treaty between Frederick and Catharine that consummated the downfall of the kingdom, and the beginning of a series of internal dissensions that arose partly from the mutual jealousies of the quasi-royal magnates of the kingdom, partly from an inveterate habit of external interference in Polish politics, and partly from the absence of cohesion in the different estates of the kingdom. Patriotic and religious and brave the Poles certainly were, but far-seeing and self-controlled and consciously concordant for their country's welfare they as certainly were not. The wretched

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<sup>7</sup> For the Catholic view of the pretext of the dissidents, cf. "Jus dissidentium in regno Poloniæ seu scrutinium juris in re ad rem theologiam juridicam," Varsaviæ, 1736; Lengenich, "Jus publicum regni Poloniæ," Gedani, 1735; Zalusk, "Conspectus nov. coll. leg. eccl. Polon. Varsaviæ, 1774. The dissident contentions are in "Jura et Libertates dissidentium in regno Poloniæ," Berlin, 1707. The works of Janssen and Klopp give a Catholic treatment of the subject. Cf. Luedtke in Wetzer and Welte, "Kirchenlexicon," III., 1857-1861, and for the Protestant view Reimann, "Der Kampf Roms gegen die religiöse Freiheit Polens," 1573-1574, in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1864, XIII., 379, "a treatise," says Cardinal Hergenroether (III., 128), "to be read with much caution and reserve." There are numberless accounts of the fall of the Polish state, all colored by the views and principles of each writer; cf. Ruihière, "Histoire de l'anarchie de Pologne," Paris, 1807; Raumer, "Polens Untergang," Leipzig, 1832; Johannes, Janssens, "Zur Genesis der ersten Theilung Polens," Frelburg, 1865, and "Russland und Polen vor 100 Jahren." Cf. also Onno Klopp, "Friedrich II.," Schaffhausen,

disunion and cross-purposes of their Diets during this decade, notably those of Radom (1767) and of Warsaw in the same year, enabled Russia to interfere effectively with the last stages of their national independence, to bring her troops permanently into Polish territory, and to put cruel enmities between the national government and the righteous sentiments of the people. The Confederation of Bar (in Podolia), though quite in keeping with similar military uprisings in Poland from time immemorial, and bravely sustained by most of the great magnates, dwindled constantly in importance during the five years of its existence (1768-1772). However, it begat the Russo-Turkish war of the same period, out of which the Muscovite issued with much military and naval glory, owing to the lamentable corruption of Turkish officialdom, but the full fruits of which were on all sides denied to Russia, as was the case a century later when the treaty of San Stefano was so amended at the Conference of Berlin as to divide unequally the spoils of war; this time, however, at the expense of Moslem Turkey. Now, however, it was Christian and Catholic Poland who must indemnify Russia for the losses caused by the powerful jealousy of Austria, backed up by the secret encouragement of her nominal ally, Frederick.

The latter had long since proposed to Catharine, and now urged strongly the partition of Poland; and as Austria was nibbling at the territory of the "Republic," the occasion seemed finally favorable.<sup>8</sup> The most enormous political crime of modern times was consummated in the spring of 1772 between the chanceries of Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna. Some timidity characterized the action of the latter court, which Frédéric rudely but truly characterized when he saw that Marie Thérèse "wept continually, but took her share as regularly." The excuse given to astonished Europe was unhappily, in fact, only too true: "the general confusion of the affairs of the Republic by reason of the discords of its magnates and the perverse temper of its citizens." Of the population thus unjustly torn from the Polish nation Austria received 2,600,000 souls, Prussia something less than a million and Russia about 1,600,000. The territory was divided, not without

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1807; Raumer, "Polens Untergang," Leipzig, 1832; Johannes Janssens, "Zur Causes de la Chute de Pologne," *Revue Historique*, March, 1891, and De Broglie, "Le Secret du Roi," Paris, 1878.

<sup>8</sup> To the mendacious assertions of Prussia and Russia, that they were only emphasizing ancient rights, long dormant in their archives, the Polish Diet justly replied that all such pretended claims had long since been wiped out by treaties, cessions and peaces. Weber, "Weltgeschichte," Leipzig, 1889, p. 329. If in a time of peace such titles of an unoffending state were not valid, what state of Europe, least of all Prussia and Russia, could lay claim to the inviolability of its territory?

some snarling, according to the political interests of each of the coparceners.<sup>9</sup> Some twelve minor treaties were necessary to force this robbery on Poland, whose bleeding trunk was still left standing, and to finally delimitate the acquired territories. By the year 1776 the first act of the dread drama was accomplished.

Its political consequences were very far-reaching.<sup>10</sup> Though Prussia obtained the smaller portion, it was, nevertheless, a very precious addition, for she thereby wiped out the long-standing Polish wedge between the kingdom of Prussia and the lands of Brandenburg and Pomerania, to which only a few years before she had added the greater part of Silesia that Austria had been compelled to cede. Greatest of all gains, perhaps, she made her Baltic coast continuous forever. In her half of White Russia Catharine came far short of the protectorate that she had originally hoped to exercise over Poland, to the exclusion of all other powers. Austria had risked nothing, but came off with the richer and more desirable part of the splendid booty. Russia acquired a homogeneous territory and population that had always been Russian in tongue and blood, while the strictly Polish territory confiscated fell entirely to Prussia and Austria. Prussia acquired a considerable German population and Austria some ancient Russian territory (Red Russia, Volyhnia, Podolia). Poland itself was now a State of only ten millions, whereas it had a population of some eighteen millions about the middle of the eighteenth century. Her condition was also more hopeless than ever, for the complicity of the three dividing nations made them solidary against any future reclamations of the sublime victim.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Dans la mise à exécution les Russes procédèrent brutalement, les Prussiens avec résolution et cynisme, les Autrichiens avec une méthode imployable et des airs de pudeur revoitée. Bientôt leurs complices durent les avertir qu'ils prenaient trop. Eh quoi! Lemberg, les salines de Wieliczka, cette unique source de revenu pour le roi de Pologne! Frédéric disait à Swieten: "Permettez moi de vous le dire: vous avez bon appétit." Lavisser-Rambaud, "Histoire Générale," vol. VII. (1896), p. 509.

<sup>10</sup> "Prussia and Austria alike, by joining to wipe out the central state of the whole region, have given themselves a mighty neighbor. Russia has wholly cast aside her character as a mere inland power, intermediate between Europe and Asia. She has won her way, after so many ages, to her old position, and much more. She has a Baltic and an Euxine seaboard. Her recovery of her old lands on the Duna and the Dnieper, her conquest of new lands on the Niemen, have brought her into the heart of Europe. And she has opened the path which was to lead her into the heart of Asia and to establish her in the intermediate mountain land between the Euxine and the Caspian." Freeman, "Historical Geography of Europe" (ed. Bury), 1903, p. 521.

<sup>11</sup> "Cela réunira les trois religions grecque, catholique et calviniste," wrote Frederick (April 9, 1777), "car nous communions d'un même corps eucharistique qui est la Pologne, et si ce n'est par pour le bien de nos âmes



We may add with a writer (Rimbaud) not suspected of partiality towards Rome or Poland, that this crime against one of the oldest continental States, and which had so often drawn the sword to protect the West against the hordes of barbarians, troubled profoundly the conscience of Europe. The pagan law of might was now openly set up in the place of the ancient Christian international law. "Hereby was created a revolution in public law (*un droit révolutionnaire*) that authorized a priori all the conquests of the Convention, the Directory and Napoleon."

The only authoritative voice that was lifted for Poland was that of the Pope. He saw only too clearly that the suppression of the political liberty of Poland was equivalent to the ruin of Catholicism in that nation. Clement XIII. wrote (April 10, 1767) to King Stanislaus that the efforts of the dissidents could only end in the total ruin of their fatherland and that they could hope to advance their private interests only through treason to the Republic. A few days later (April 29) he wrote to the King of France as follows:

Our paternal love for you, and our desire for your true and lasting glory, suggest that we point out the occasions through which the eldest son of the Church may manifest his piety towards his Holy Mother. Your Majesty is aware that all the peoples among whom the light of the Gospel shines form but one body, the Catholic Church, of which Christ is the head. . . . Hence, if one of the members be suffering, all ought to suffer with it. Now, this is the situation of your brothers in Jesus Christ, the Catholics of Poland. The dissidents in that kingdom have left nothing undone to ruin the faith, to overthrow the most sacred laws, and to change the form of government on which depends the fate of the Catholic religion. Who can deny that to free this nation from such dangers is an object supremely worthy of your Majesty?

The France of 1767 was unequal to such "Gesta Dei," and no doubt the Pope was well aware of it. It was indeed in no interest of France that Poland should be divided or weakened, yet, as a matter of fact, it was the wrong-headed and inopportune intervention of Choiseul that actually brought about the partition of Poland. To his agents at Constantinople is largely owing the declaration of war by Turkey against Russia that, as we have seen, made evident the weakness of the Ottoman power, the last bulwark of Polish independence, and left the Republic at the mercy of Frederick and Catharine. Two days later (April 31) Clement XIII. wrote to the King of Spain:

In view of the terrible revolution of which Poland is a victim, it is our apostolic duty to exhibit compassion towards this orthodox people, and to implore for them the aid of the Catholic princes. . . . We appeal to the religious sentiments of your Majesty, and we implore you in the Lord to use all the counsel, good offices and zealous efforts that your wisdom may suggest, in order to succor this illustrious and innocent nation.

To the Emperor, Joseph II., he wrote about the same time, and *ce sera sûrement un grand objet pour le bien de nos états.*" His cynical blasphemy is in keeping with the magnitude of the injustice and violence of which he was the first instigator.

in similar terms of earnest prayer and exhortation. He tells him that he is the head of the Holy Roman Empire; that his is the first place in the Christian Republic, and that as such he is the protector and champion of the Catholic Church. He describes with vigor the revolting iniquity of the pretensions of the dissidents as put forth and sustained by Catharine. They are not content, he says, to abide by the laws of Poland, which treat them with the greatest humanity, but they have become so bold as to demand entirely new laws for the whole kingdom, which are detrimental to the Catholics. They insist on extorting from an independent Catholic government advantages which the non-Catholic Princes of Europe everywhere deny to their Catholic subjects. The Pope could do no more; or, rather, he could invoke the aid of the Almighty. This he did by the canonization (1767) of Saint John Canty, an illustrious theologian and professor of Cracow (1397-1471). He caused a strophe to be inserted in the office of the saint that will forever bear witness to the affection of the Holy See for the unhappy Poland:

O qui negasti nemini  
Opem roganti patrium  
Regnum tuere; postulant  
Clives poloni et exteri.

Clement XIV., during whose reign the partition of Poland was accomplished, was no less faithful in his endeavors to obtain from the Catholic courts some measure of help and encouragement for the Confederates of Bar. And when he could do no more for the independence of the Polish nation, he remained keenly alive to the religious liberties of the new subjects of Russia. Shortly before his death he protested through his Nuncio at Warsaw against all acts detrimental to the Catholic faith. Marie Thérèse wrote to the Nuncio Visconti that no moderation or justice were to be expected from Catharine, who approved fully the cruel violence done by her agents to the churches and the persons of the Uniat Greeks. Clement XIV. wrote (September 7, 1776) to his Nuncios at Vienna, Madrid and Paris:

The recent accounts of the disasters of the Church in Poland and Russia are not calculated to confirm in the mind of the Holy Father his long-cherished hope that a vigorous intervention of the powers would secure for the Catholics of Poland and Russia that religious freedom which he implores heaven constantly to preserve for them. Let the powers at least lessen his fear of going before the tribunal of God as guilty of any omission in so grave a matter. . . . If they were unable to prevent the pre-concerted and violent dismemberment of the nation, let them at least protest in favor of the rights and prerogatives of religion.

Compare these admirable efforts with the cynical letters of Voltaire to Catharine apropos of the partition of Poland and the noble efforts of the Confederates of Bar to restore their country's inde-

pendence and greatness. The Polish confederates are declared by him to be a contagious pest; he sneers contemptuously at their pious and chivalrous manifestoes, and abuses the brave handful of Frenchmen who went to their aid. Catharine is a radiant figure in his humanitarian pantheon, and the greatest saint that the North has yet produced (December 3, 1771).<sup>12</sup>

In the treaty which the King and Diet of Poland were compelled to sign September 18, 1773, the eighth article reads as follows:

In the provinces ceded by this treaty the Roman Catholics shall continue to enjoy all their civil rights; with regard to their religion, the *status quo* shall be constantly observed, *i. e.*, they shall have freedom of worship and discipline, together with all their churches and ecclesiastical properties, in the condition that they were found when they passed under the domination of Her Imperial Majesty, in September, 1772. Her successors shall not enforce their sovereign rights to the prejudice of the *status quo* of the Roman Catholic religion in the above-mentioned territories.<sup>13</sup>

In the same sense Catharine wrote (December 31, 1780) to Pius VI. (Theiner, II., 106):

From the beginning of our reign to the present day we have decreed and maintained within our vast empire the freedom of every one to worship unhindered the living God, without any oppression of any religion whatsoever. On the contrary, our sceptre is the support of every religion and is favorable to its followers as long as they deserve favor and perform the duties of faithful subjects and good citizens. . . . No Christian community need fear the loss of its privileges or its rites. We have just ordered that on the occasion of the death or resignation of a Uniat parish priest, the community must be interrogated as to the rite and the priest that it prefers, so that it may obtain from the authorities the priest it desires.

The real fate of the Uniat Greeks in the territory ceded to Russia was, however, made plain by the frightful massacres which immediately followed in the Ukraine. Catharine let loose wild bands of Zaporog Cossacks, who pillaged and murdered in all directions. It was an awful visitation for the Roman Catholics of both rites, and is rightly styled by M. Rambaud, the popular French historian of Russia, a "jacquerie orthodoxe." These ferocious bands of

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<sup>12</sup> The cynical attitude of Voltaire toward all noble patriotism is only too well known. Numerous revolting specimens of it may be seen in the work of M. Nourrisson, "Voltaire et le Voltairianisme" (Paris, 1896), c. VII., "La patrie, pp. 336-374. Of the first partition of Poland he writes (May 29, 1772): "My heroine (Catharine) has acted in a more noble and useful way, by destroying the anarchy in Poland. She has given to each one what she thinks belongs to him, beginning, of course, with herself." Elsewhere he calls himself her "idolater," her "pagan," "the priest of her temple." She is "Sainte Catherine" and "Notre Dame de Pétersbourg." And this foul-mouthed avaricious man, servile at once and blasphemous, dared to preach of justice and equity, to denounce tyranny and oppression, to set himself up as the apostle of liberty! It is well known how disgusted Catharine became with the French Revolution, and how violent was the reaction which its excesses begat in her mind.

<sup>13</sup> Martens, "Recueil des principaux traités," II., 149, and Theiner, "Documents annexés à l'Allocution de SS. Grégoire XIV., prononcée dans le consistoire secret," 22 Juillet, 1842, n. 3.

brigands, headed by Russian monks, swept through the Roman Catholic settlements, killing and burning. Even old men, women and children were pitilessly slain. On the same gallows were frequently hung a Pole, a Jew and a dog. Men were burned or buried alive and pregnant women were disemboweled. In a few days fifty villages and three cities were reduced to ashes. In one city of the territory of Kiew 16,000 persons were put to the sword and a well choked with corpses of tender children. It is said that as many as 200,000 Roman Catholics of both rites perished in this incredible onslaught of Russian fanaticism.<sup>14</sup>

The second partition of Poland (1792) was a still more cynical act than the first. The Poles in the meantime had begun the long-delayed work of creating a constitutional State in the modern sense, with an hereditary monarch, a bicameral system and separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. All Europe applauded, even Frederick William II., the successor of the great Frederick. He even allied himself with Poland for a brief while, but the advantages of the partition were still too fresh in the minds of Prussian statesmen, and the Russian thirst of violent and vindictive conquest still too unabated to permit the Polish nation to take its place in the modern world. A new excuse was added—the fear of encouraging the world-wide proselytism of the French Jacobins. In spite of the bravery and patriotism of Kosciusko almost every feature of the campaigns of 1768-1772 was repeated by the Polish nobles—discord, treason, jealousy, fear of their own serfs. As at Radom and Warsaw, so now at Grodno (1793) the members of the Polish Diet were compelled by Russian authority to give a silent consent to the act by which Russia added to her domain one-half of Lithuania, with Little Poland, Volyhnia, Podolia and Polish Ukraine. Prussia acquired Great Poland and the cities of Dantzic and Thorn. Once more the Russian Ambassador was omnipotent at Warsaw—this time the brutal Igelström. The shadow-king Poniatowski ruled nominally about one-third of the ancient State of the Jagellons. Czartoryski and Radziwill, Branicki and Potocki, Sanguisco and Joblonowski had done their fatherland to death by reason of their insane attachment to the most disorderly and antiquated forms of feudalism, their selfish contempt for the great mass of laboring Poles, their mutual jealousy and their frequent alliances with the foreign enemy. One last hopeless attempt of Kosciusko and a despairing faction of the people, and

<sup>14</sup> Père Lescoeur (op. cit. below, p. 7) vouches for the authenticity of a letter of Catharine to Maximilian Zelezniak, a colonel of the Cossacks. M. Rambaud calls it a "prétendue lettre de Catharine," but admits that it was read to the Cossacks. It is a sanguinary appeal, perfectly in keeping with the character of a murderess and a debauchee.

all was over. *Finis Poloniae!* the hero cried, as he fell fighting against the greatest of Russian generals, Suwarow (1794). Warsaw succumbed, and with it the Polish State. The following year a third and last partition gave Cracow to Austria with other territory, Warsaw and the left bank of the Vistula to Prussia. The remainder fell to Russia, *i. e.*, the other half of Lithuania and what remained of Volhynia. Thus was accomplished the greatest political injustice of modern times, the disruption and extinction by a "societas leonina" of a civilized Christian State of Europe that had rendered countless services to all her Western neighbors through the centuries of their weakness and their gradual consolidation. In vain had Poland hurled back nearly a hundred invasions of pagan tribes and Moslem enemies, in vain raised the siege of Vienna (1671), in vain withstood the overflow of Protestantism, in vain made heroic efforts to re-create herself amid the most untoward circumstances—it was all of no avail; she perished, not so much because she was weak and obstinate, divided and wrong-headed, as because she was a Catholic nation, and because the latter half of the eighteenth century was to be the darkest period in the history of Catholicism. The clear proof of it is that throughout the nineteenth century the history of both Prussian and Russian Poland has been the history of oppressed and abused Catholicism, a long chapter of national martyrdom that our delicate modern ears may well listen to from time to time amid the outcries against China and the protests against the Ottoman Turk.

### III.

Poland in the first half of the eighteenth century was the most extensive State in Europe—if we except Russia. To the east the Duna and the Dnieper flowed through its territory, to the west the Vistula and the Wartha. It reached from the Dniester and the Carpathians to the Baltic, where its possessions cut in two the State of Prussia and threatened both Russia and Sweden. Brave warriors of the Crown of Poland and Duchy of Lithuania had put together that vast State, largely at the expense of Russia, but also at the expense of the Southern barbarian pagan and the ever-threatening Turk. It is a glorious and romantic chapter of history how all this was gotten and kept, and a certain unity brought about in government and civilization, alas! too slight and superficial to withstand the fierce shocks that were to rend the land again and again until its total ruin. The population was thin and scattered, from fourteen to eighteen millions of people scattered over vast level areas (*polé*—plains—Poland), interspersed with forests, lakes

and swamps, such as Gustav Freytag and Sienkewicz have described in immortal pages.

Politically it was made up of strictly Polish lands, known as the Crown of Poland and of the territory known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Ethnographically it was inhabited by no less than five races—Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Germans and Jews. Three religions divided the allegiance of the people—not to speak of the Jewish religion. With a few exceptions the Poles were Catholic, the Germans were Protestant, the Russians originally “orthodox” (schismatic). Since the Union of Lublin (1569) an uneasy peace had existed between the Catholics who formed the vast majority of the population and the dissidents (Protestants and Russians), who formed the minority—perhaps one-quarter of the nation. The Union of Brest (1595) brought a great multitude of the Russian schismatic population within the pale of Roman Catholicism. To this desirable result the Jesuits had contributed more than any other body of men. Their stupendous success in arresting the Reformation in Poland, their political services to the Crown, their merits as educators of youth and as representatives of literature and intellectual refinement, made them at once passionately loved of the nation at large and with equal intensity detested by the Lutheran ministers and the Russian “Popes.” In one sense it is true that Poland paid with the loss of its nationality for the incomparably greater gift of the Catholic faith. It was the Protestant Dissidents, sustained by Prussia, dwelling generally in the larger and more orderly cities of Poland like Dantzic and Thorn, who were the most turbulent disturbers of the internal order, and who left no stone unturned to ruin their fatherland and destroy the State of the Sigismunds and the Sobieskis.

A strong royal authority was needed in the seventeenth century to weld these loose and discordant masses. For various reasons, some of them honorable, it did not develop. The monarchy remained an elective one, the gift of the nobility, and one of the most curiously constituted of European nobilities. It was allodial, not feudal, *i. e.*, it held its lands by right of prior possession or personal conquest, and not from the King. Nor was the nobility systematically graded and organized as in the States to the west. In Poland proper an almost countless body of small nobles—the *szlachta*—was the true political power; in Lithuania it was the great magnates. Military “confederations” and more or less irregular assemblies or “dietines” were their highest expression of unity—the nobility of Poland aimed at keeping down the peasantry and weakening the royal authority. There was a representative Parliament or Diet, composed of two chambers, in the lower of which

the small nobility was dominant through its deputies, while in the upper—the Senate—the magnates were supreme. The royal ministers were named for life, and were duplicated for each half of the kingdom. At each election of a King the successful candidate must sign certain *pacta conventa*, by which the royal authority gradually dwindled away—eventually it was a painted simulacrum, totally dependent on the Diet. The ministers of the Crown, holding for life, are free to obey or not as it suits them; the “dietines” can reject by a single veto or *perhorrescit* the decisions of the Diet. The Diet itself can be “broken” by the *liberum veto* of a single noble member. From 1652 to 1704 forty-eight of the forty-five Diets were thus “broken” or dissolved; any traitor or fool could arrest the national life and obstruct all movement. To the Diet one might lawfully oppose the “confederation”—only here the decisions were taken by simple majority and no veto was allowed. It has been well said that “in Poland it was the opposition that was organized, while the government was anarchic.” The nobility was the nation—there were neither an independent peasantry nor a class of intelligent and patriotic burghers. The nobility itself was unevenly balanced. Four or five quasi-royal families, like the Radziwill and the Czartoryski, with splendid castles, vast domains and small standing armies, stood at the head of the State. After them came a dozen or more great families descended from royal dignitaries, then two or three hundred families, owning very large estates. Some twenty or thirty thousand nobles were masters of a village or two. Finally came the great mob of the *szlachta* or “little gentry,” about 1,300,000, known to the Germans as Schollen-Adel, from the insignificant clod of earth that too often constituted the estate of the *szlachic*. It was said that when the *szlachic's* dog lay down in the midst of his master's land his tail rested on the estate of a neighbor.

All sources of revenues in the State were taken up by this poor and hungry aristocracy—clerical dignities and benefices, public charges, the judicial offices, even the legal profession. They were exempted from taxes and obtained free salt from the King's only source of revenue, the salt mines of Wieliczka. The German cities like Thorn, Dantzig, Culm and Magdeburg had a higher and more settled civil life, and enjoyed their own rights and customs. The Polish cities like Gnesen, Posen, Cracow and Plock, the Russian cities like Kiew and Smolensk, and the Lithuanian cities like Wilna and Grodno, were inhabited largely by Jews, in whose hands were industry and commerce, banking and the collection of taxes. There was almost no Polish Catholic bourgeoisie; the tyranny of the nobles had nearly everywhere killed off all spirit

of progress and prostrated all national industry and commerce. The once free peasantry was gradually enslaved and bound to the glebe. In time even the King was forbidden to protect him, and so he became a chattel of the Polish noble. Indeed, he owed the first improvement in his lot to Russia, and not to his native master. In 1778 an English traveler declared that the peasants of Poland were the most wretched human beings he had ever seen. The peasant had "ni loi ni roi;" the consequence was that his strong arm was wanting in the hour of national defense, and the State fell that had known how to do great military deeds, but had not known how to protect the poor Christian man or do him justice.

If we add to this wretched picture of maladministration and lack of justice the miserable condition of the finances and the army, we shall cease to wonder why the bravery of the Polish nobles failed to save their politically decadent nation. In 1764 the King received from Poland a little over one million dollars, from Lithuania less than four hundred thousand—all his revenues did not amount to more than two million dollars, or one-sixtieth of the revenues of the King of France. His land was open on all sides to invasion; his army was only the "levée en masse" of the noble cavaliers, who stayed with him or returned at their pleasure. Every smallest noble was a royal elector and a little sovereign, who came and went as best suited him. Such as the army was, the small nobles eagerly grasped at all the military offices; the regiments were bought and sold; the artillery corps counted scarcely 100 men, and a boy of 15, a Sapieha, was chief artillerist! The arsenals were empty, there were almost no fortresses in a land on all sides exposed to the longing greed of its enemies. "Every citizen was a soldier, yet there was no army." Nevertheless, a Radziwill could lead 10,000 men to the Confederation of Bar, and a Czartoryski and a Potocki could also muster many thousands—infantry, uhlands, dragoons and Cossacks.

It ought not to surprise us, therefore, to read that on six or more occasions since 1518 the question of partitioning Poland had been discussed among her neighbors—at least, in every election of a Polish King, Russia, Prussia and Austria, France and Sweden are more and more openly interested and further, now by intrigue and seduction, again by threats and actual violence, the claims of their respective candidates. Usually it is the candidate of Russia, Prussia or Austria who is chosen, where-upon all Europe breathes freely at the removal of the war scare that in the eighteenth century was more or less chronic apropos of the Polish succession.



## IV.

Among the articles of the treaty of Grodno (1793) that regularized the second partition of Poland was one that guaranteed the religious liberties and rights of the Roman Catholics, this time with specific mention of both rites:

The Roman Catholics of both rites who come under the sceptre of Her Imperial Majesty shall not only enjoy the full and free exercise of their religion throughout all the Russias, in conformity with the system of toleration that has been introduced there, but they shall also be secured in the ceded provinces . . . in the strictly actual condition of their hereditary possessions. *Her Majesty the Empress promises, irrevocably, for herself, her heirs and successors, that she will forever maintain the said Catholics of both rites in the undisturbed possession of their prerogatives, properties and churches, the full exercise of their worship and discipline, and of all the rights attached to their worship.* She declares for herself and her successors that she will never exercise her sovereign rights to the prejudice of the Catholic religion of both rites. (Theiner, op. cit. II., 110.)

But who even then imagined that this agreement would be observed by an unprincipled daughter of Anhalt? She had been brought up in the principles of German Lutheranism (*cujus regio illius religio*), and had in any case long since bade adieu to any sense of shame or Christian morality. Moreover, she was only too anxious to cause domestic oblivion of her own evil deeds by leaving a free hand to the immemorial hatred of the Byzantine clergy of Russia, and by the encouragement of an unjust and ignorant popular fanaticism against the Poles. The Banquo-like ghost of her murdered husband and predecessor, Peter III., would not down among his outraged subjects—so she found a new vent for the anger that threatened herself on all sides. The “Rusky Bog” should be glorified,<sup>15</sup> a crusade against the Latin West be led in His name, Holy Russia be faced toward Jerusalem (and Constantinople), its hegemony established over all the Christian populations of the Balkans and the empire of Constantine be renewed in the successors of the Romanoffs! In the soul of Catharine there dwelt beside the superficial pseudo-humanitarianism of the encyclopedists no little of the uneasy political mysticism that the Czars had inherited from their Byzantine models, likewise a very large measure of the contempt and hatred of Rome that the clergy of Constantinople had for cen-

<sup>15</sup> The Rusky Bog (Russian God) is the national form of jingoism or chauvinism. “It is something,” says Padre Tondini, a most authoritative and not unsympathetic writer about Russia, “akin to the temper of Israel when it interpreted materially the glorious spiritual prophecies that God had made to it. It reads and interprets all history in the light of a divine vocation for Russia as the head of the Orient, apart from and every way superior to the Latin West. The only unity of the West is in the Pope; therefore is he the enemy of the Czar and the rival of the Russian people. But this God of Russia has always used the Roman Bishop as an instrument for the execution of His designs upon His chosen people!” Cf. P. Semerla, “La Chiesa Greco-Russa,” Genova, 1904, p. 31.

turies maliciously nourished in the Russian heart against the day when that clergy would be itself powerless to propagate the evil virus.<sup>16</sup> If we add her Protestant German training and sentiments and her total absence of moral principle, we shall be able to understand a priori the animus of her dealings with the great masses of the Roman Catholic population who were now completely at her mercy.

The principal weapon of Catharine was an entirely new one in the varied history of European politico-ecclesiastical diplomacy: she confided to a shameless traitor the highest ecclesiastical authority over all her Roman Catholic subjects.<sup>17</sup> Thereby she avoided a conflict with an honest episcopate, confused the clergy, encouraged the self-seeking and unworthy among them, robbed the Uniat Greek laity of all free contact with the source of Catholic strength—the Holy See—and established an absolute Catholic Pope of her own making and ever under her own control. Scarcely had she acquired her share of the first partition of Poland when of her own initiative and without any Papal approval she created in the annexed White Russia the episcopal see of Mohilev, and gave over to it the jurisdiction over all the Roman Catholics of Russia. She named as its first titular a man whose memory will always be abhorred not only by Roman Catholics, but by all who admire the natural virtues of probity, candor and equity. Through this pliant agent she became herself the Bishop of the unfortunate Uniats and taught many a lesson of advanced cunning and boldness to the shade of the Virgin Queen, hitherto her great counterpart in all public and private "villenia."

Stanislaus Siestrencewicz Bohusz was born in Lithuania, of Cal-

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pitzipios, "L'Eglise Orientale," Paris, 1858, and the epoch-making "Photius" of Cardinal Hergenroether (Regensburg, 1867-1869, 3 vols.).

<sup>17</sup> It is well to remember that among the Polish clergy, even before the partition, not a few were reputed inimical to the Holy See. Stanislaus Konarski, provincial of the Piarists (Fathers of St. Joseph Calasancius, who died in 1648; they were active in Poland since 1641, and are properly known as "Regulares pauperes Matris Dei scholarum piarum"—hence "Piarists"—after the Jesuits, the chief educational force of the ancient Polish state), was an admirer of the contemporary French philosophy and author of "Religion des honnêtes gens," and an outspoken opponent of the Papal Nunciature. Among the higher ecclesiastics not a few were Freemasons; Count Podolski, the unworthy primate of Poland, and several of its Bishops were staunch adherents of the principal anti-Catholic measures. Cardinal Hergenroether, "Kirchengeschichte," III., 593-594; cf. Theiner's "Histoire de Clément XIV.," 1852, I., 314; II., 179, a very copiously documented work, "aber mit leichtem oft leidenschaftlichem Raisonnement geschrieben" (Card. Hergenroether, op. cit. III., 455). The Polish episcopate, like all other offices of any pecuniary value, had been entirely reserved to the nobles of the State; the parochial clergy were reckoned among the serf-peasantry and excluded from all ecclesiastical promotion.

vinist parents, in 1731. He made his studies at the University of Koenigsberg, also at Frankfort, Amsterdam and London, at the expense of the Calvinist Synod of his native place. He became an officer in the Prussian army, and later a captain in the Polish army, whence he passed to the service of the great house of Radziwill. It is said that his subsequent abjuration of Calvinism was due to certain hopes he entertained of marrying a rich Catholic heiress. Massalski, the Catholic Bishop of Wilna (then Polish territory), took an interest in him and ordained him priest in 1763. Later he was made parish priest, canon of the Cathedral and vicar general. In 1773 Massalski had obtained his promotion as Auxiliary Bishop of Wilna, with the purpose of providing for the spiritual needs of the territories newly annexed to Russia and still ecclesiastically subject to the diocese of Wilna. It was here that Catharine found him, another Thomas Cromwell, able and unscrupulous, and as devoted to the cæsaropapism of Catharine as he was inimical to the rights and interests of the Holy See. Though a born Pole, he had always fought against the interests of his fatherland, and was therefore doubly recommended to the Empress. The Holy See at first refused to acknowledge the act of Catharine in making Siestrencewicz Bishop of Mohilev, but in the interests of the unhappy vanquished recognized him as vicar apostolic or rather, with canonical precision, as "visitator" of the churches of White Russia. He came to Mohilev in 1774. His first pastoral letter revealed the spirit in which he was to preside for fifty years over the affairs of Roman Catholicism in Russia. He declared himself the supreme pastor of all Roman Catholics in White Russia, and, by an unjustifiable usurpation, claimed jurisdiction over all the Bishops *in partibus* resident in that territory. The Papal Nuncio, Garampi, felt obliged to regularize temporarily these acts of Siestrencewicz, as he was in need of his aid in order to execute the Papal bull suppressing the Jesuits. Later on Pius VI., caught between the dying agonies of Poland and the growing despotism of Catharine, was also compelled to yield from time to time and legalize the many acts of violent usurpation committed by Siestrencewicz.

Thus, in 1778, he invested him, for three years, with the authority of Papal "visitator" over the Roman Catholic monasteries (chiefly Basilian and Uniat). An upright and worthy Catholic Bishop would have utilized this office for the welfare of the Church. Siestrencewicz administered it in the interest of Russian ecclesiastical supremacy. Under the pretense of improving ecclesiastical studies he compelled the monasteries to furnish annually a certain number of students who were freed from the control of their superiors, placed under the surveillance of the Bishop of Mohilev, and sent

to such schools as he should designate, to return or not, as each one chose, to his monastery. This order implied the ruin of all monastic life and discipline. Were it not for the permission accorded to the Jesuits to open their own novitiate at Polock the treasonable plan of Siestrencewicz would have succeeded. The real purpose of his programme of studies, dictated to him, of course, from St. Petersburg, is revealed by the following article (25) :

The programme of studies to which the communities shall conform and of the languages that they shall teach shall not differ from that transmitted and prescribed by the government. It is the duty of the latter to form in its subjects an identity of sentiments and knowledge, in keeping with the laws and the circumstances of the country. We are convinced, on the other hand, that our Empress, given her exalted wisdom and the entire loyalty of her promises, will not oblige us to teach anything contrary to our religion.

He was hitherto, in the eyes of the Holy See and the Catholic world, only a "visitor" of the Roman Catholics of Russia. Catharine gratified his ambition and satisfied her own resolution to get rid of any Polish clerical authority in the annexed provinces, by creating him Archbishop of Mohilev, in a ukase of January 26, 1782. She had already (1780) sought in vain from Pius VI. the confirmation of this intended step. In the meantime an ex-Jesuit, Benislawski, was sent to Rome to obtain the confirmation of the imperial ukase and his own nomination as coadjutor to Siestrencewicz. Benislawski had a Catholic heart, and his elevation did tend to heal somewhat the grave wounds that Siestrencewicz continued to inflict on Roman Catholicism throughout all Russia. The harshest Byzantinism of Catharine awoke no resentment in the Archbishop of Mohilev. In the ukase of his nomination he read and applauded the thirteenth article :

It is forbidden to receive bulls and briefs coming from Rome in the name of the Pope. These bulls and briefs should be at once sent to the Senate. The latter, when it is satisfied that they contain nothing foreign to the laws of the land or the God-given authority of the monarch, will make them known to Her Majesty and await her good pleasure to publish them.

The preceding article (12) was also very injurious to the welfare of Roman Catholicism in a land like Russia and the ancient Russian provinces of Poland, where the monasteries had from time immemorial been intimately connected with the spiritual life and the temporal well-being of the poor and suffering peasantry :

The Archbishop shall send to the court a detailed account of the condition of the religious houses. He will make known how many devote themselves to the education of youth; how many to the care of the sick and the poor, and thus deserve the protection of the government; also who are those who pass their time in idleness and live a way quite useless to their neighbors.

In the hands of the Archbishop of Mohilev this meant the keeping of a "liste noire" of all the Roman Catholic monks of Russia, with all the evils consequent upon such a wretched system of

espionage. Indeed, from this time there went on a constantly increasing persecution of all the monasteries of men and women until at the present writing one may say that the once widespread Catholic monastic system of spiritual service, instruction, prayer and charity is about extinct throughout the entire Russian share of the old Polish State.<sup>18</sup>

Pius VI. recognized finally the archiepiscopal see of Mohilev by the bull *Onerosa pastoralis officii* (April 15, 1783), after all due canonical measures had been arranged with the Papal Nuncio at Warsaw. He also agreed to the choice of Benislawski as coadjutor of Mohilev, but reserved to himself any future division of an archdiocese that reached then to the confines of China. He accorded to the missionary prefects of Moscow, Petersburg and the Chersonesus seats in the chapter of the new Archbishop. He granted to Siestrenczewicz ordinary jurisdiction only over the Roman Catholics of Latin rite; for the Uniat Greeks he received only delegated powers. This did not prevent him from assuming the office and airs of a spiritual dictator and furthering in all possible ways the will of Catharine and the long-cherished designs of her imperial chancery.

He placed himself particularly at their disposal for the purpose of exterminating the Uniat Greek communities and incorporating them with the Russian ecclesiastical system. This was, indeed, the ultimate aim of all his acts, or rather of all the measures that the imperial chancery executed through him as through a soulless and spiritless dummy. He was a very ambitious man, and gave himself out as the sole metropolitan of both rites throughout the vast empire of Russia. In public documents he wrote himself down with unblushing mendacity a "legatus natus a latere" of the Holy See. Through the intercession both of Catharine and of Paul I. he sought to obtain a Cardinal's hat. This last insolent humiliation both Pius VI. and Pius VII. firmly resisted. He died in 1826, having betrayed both officially and outrageously every interest of the Roman Catholic Church since 1772, *i. e.*, for forty-

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<sup>18</sup> The Russian Government has declared an open war against all teaching orders like the Jesuits, the Piarists, the Lazarists. No convent can devote its labors to the teaching of youth, not even the Sisters of Charity, who are only tolerated. Their novitiate is suppressed; they are cut off from the authority of the Lazarists, and from all French direction. Those who were still living in 1860 were old and feeble, confined to hospital service and incapable of any of the services that Catholics might rightly expect from Sisters of Charity. At that date the religious orders in the old Kingdom of Poland could yet receive novices; it is the Russian purpose to first totally exterminate Roman Catholicism in the provinces annexed to the empire. In the meantime it affects a show of relatively less iniquitous measures in Poland proper. Lescoeur, "L'Eglise Catholique et le Gouvernement Russe," Paris, 1903, pp. 158-159.

four years. To her greater sorrow, however, his mantle fell upon another Pole who was, if possible, a still greater traitor—Joseph Siemachko—and to whom was also granted an exceedingly long life of official villainy (he died only in 1868).

## V.

After the third partition of Poland (1795) an act of supreme injustice was committed by Catharine, with the approval of the Archbishop of Mohilev. She placed all Roman Catholics in her vast dominions under the control of the "College of Justice" established by her for the affairs of Inland, Esthland and Finland, *i. e.*, for entirely Protestant territory. The Catholic discipline was surely in capable and worthy hands after that measure, and the Semiramis of the North might feel satisfied that she was observing with punctilio the treaty of Grodno made two years earlier (1793), in which she promised "irrevocably" to maintain the "free" exercise of the Catholic religion for both rites. It is true that after her death Paul I., moved by the gross injustice of this act, withdrew the Roman Catholics of Russia from the control of this anomalous bureau of Russian schismatic laymen, and created a Roman Catholic "College of Justice," but always with Siestrencewicz at its head. It was the nucleus or first shape of the later "Catholic College," or department of worship that has since been adapted again and again to the needs of Russian diplomacy, but remains yet an instrument of humiliation for all Catholics, and of oppression for the persecuting Russian State.

In his history of Roman Catholicism in the domains of the Czar an authoritative Russian statesman acknowledges that the purpose of Catharine was the complete exclusion of the Pope from the exercise of any disciplinary authority over the Roman Catholics of her empire, especially any influence of the higher Polish ecclesiastics and the Nuncio at Warsaw. She accomplished the revolution, he admits, by prohibiting the publication without her consent of any Papal communication with the Roman Catholics of her State. At the same time, he adds, she guaranteed *liberty* of worship and *organized* the administration of the Roman Catholic Church. It would be hard for Count Tolstoi to contradict himself more clearly and to exhibit more effectively the mendacity and hypocrisy of Catharine. He admits that no Pole or even impartial European has yet had the courage to do justice to that "grande souveraine," but maintains that she saved Roman Catholicism in Russia by the institution of a strong local authority and the establishment of regular dioceses. It is only necessary to say that her conduct

resembled the play of "Hamlet" with *Hamlet* left out—the administration of the Roman Catholic Church being as much a part of its essence as its teaching. The Febronians and Josephites of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot answer the arguments of the Russian statesman; that is reserved to those who maintain the divinely-given independence of the Holy See. Tolstoi lauds to the skies the character of Siestrenczewicz, his curbing of the monastic independence and his reformation of ecclesiastical studies, especially his introduction of the *Catéchisme de Montpellier*—a work put by Rome on the Index of forbidden books. He is particularly pleased with the programme of the Archbishop of Mohilev for the teaching of canon law—*it was to be taught within the limits traced by Her Imperial Majesty for the Catholic Church within her empire and protected by her*. The idea of Siestrenczewicz is thus emphasized by Tolstoi himself, who thereby exhibits his clear intelligence of the consequences of this most cowardly and shameful act that a Catholic Bishop could imagine, short of formal apostasy.<sup>19</sup> This author, speaking in the name of all Russian diplomacy, recites with approval all the blameworthy acts of the Archbishop of Mohilev, and with a truly Byzantine cynicism taunts contemptuously the Holy See with its approval of many acts of the traitor, an approval, as we have seen, granted as a lesser evil and in view of the great sufferings of the oppressed Catholics of both rites; at a moment, too, when the Holy See could no longer appeal to a single Catholic State for any political support. We may here insert a passage from the famous letter of Catharine to Pius VI., in which, with unparalleled audacity and insolence she demands for the Bishop of Mohilev the archiepiscopal pallium:

"As to the person of the Bishop Siestrenczewicz, Illustrious Sovereign, accused of having exceeded your rescript and of abusing the power you gave him, we will not leave unanswered this accusation. Though we tolerate, as did our ancestors, all forms of worship in our vast provinces, and among them the Roman religion, we cannot consent that its votaries should in any way whatsoever depend upon a foreign power; hence throughout our empire we do not permit the bulls of the Roman See to be published except by our order." That is why, she adds, Siestrenczewicz was able to open a Jesuit novitiate, in spite of the Pope, and by her orders. The bull of Clement XIV. suppressing the society had not been published in Russia. "Is it possible," she goes on, "that in the accomplishment of the duties of his oath he could incur your reproaches and make himself unworthy of receiving from you the archiepiscopal dignity and the pallium? That dignity, being a degree of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, has always and everywhere been subject to the sovereign power, even among potentates of the Roman Catholic religion, rulers who hold themselves in a measure as subject to the Papal authority in spiritual matters. This sovereign right is especially incontestable in our empire. Impelled by his zeal for the Roman Church, for the perfect administration of his flock, and for all his efforts in favor of public unity, we have determined to elevate Siestrenczewicz to the

<sup>19</sup> Ap. Lescoeur, p. 30. The memoir of Siestrenczewicz referred to by Tolstoi is printed by him (II., 436) from the original in the archives of Moscow, and is entitled "On the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the Empire."

dignity of Archbishop of Mohilev. . . . We pray you, illustrious Sovereign, merely in order to preserve the customs of the Roman Church, to send to the new Archbishop the pallium, and to consecrate his coadjutor. We shall hold this an agreeable condescendance on your part, and in turn, when occasion offers, we shall not refuse to reciprocate the courtesy. We unite our prayers with those of our orthodox Church, which offers up its petitions for the reunion of all."

This letter, swarming with lies and historical ignorance, was written to the heroic Pius VI. in favor of a Roman Catholic Bishop on the morrow of the first partition of Poland and on the eve of the French Revolution. In it there speaks not so much the heart of Holy Russia as the embittered Lutheran, rejoicing in the hour when she can inflict on the head of Catholicism a disgrace that knows no parallel, and which was mitigated by only one consideration—the sense of helpless innocence on the part of the recipient. It may not be out of place to compare with the Siestrenczewicz of Count Tolstoi and Catharine the portrait of the Archbishop as he appeared in 1819 to that great upright nobleman of the old school, Joseph De Maistre. Siestrenczewicz was then nearly ninety years of age—he died (1826) at the age of 96:

There is now in Russia a very curious personage, who could belong to no other time and place than the present. It is the Archbishop of Mohilev, Catholic primate of all the Russias, a Protestant and a cavalry officer before being made a Bishop, an instrument in the hands of our enemies a thousand times more dangerous than a professed Protestant, so servile, moreover, as to disgust a noble power which is satisfied with obedience, always ready to contradict and, if need be, to oppose the Holy See, because he is sure of being supported. It is he who once said in court, as the Emperor passed by: "There goes my Pope!" The witnesses of that admirable profession of faith are yet living at St. Petersburg. This strange Bishop undertook one day to falsify a text of the Council of Trent and another text taken from a letter of Pius VI. For this double "fault" (one had to be satisfied with this word) the actually reigning Pope (Pius VII.) could not refrain from writing him a brief in which he blamed him with much severity, and ordered him to make a retraction. But the Bishop of Mohilev, knowing that he was safe, laughed at the brief and made no retraction of any kind. To crown his merits, this prelate has become a member of the Bible Society. . . . A Catholic Bishop as a member of the Bible Society is something so monstrous that it defies expression. The Pope sent to this singular prelate another brief, which he heeded no more than the preceding one; his conduct merited (imperial) approval. That is how a Catholic Bishop is sustained (in Russia) against the Pope. It is the abolition of all order, as though the officers of a regiment were declared free of any subordination to their general. It means the annihilation of Catholicism.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Lettres et Opuscules," II., 389, Paris, 1861. Père Lescoeur, from whom I translate this page, adds (p. 27): "One must read this whole letter of De Maistre on the condition of Christianity in Europe. All that he says of the Russian Church is literally true to-day, and would of itself be sufficient to illustrate the real and fatal situation of Catholic Poland in the eyes of Russia; the latter refuses to comprehend any other solution for the Polish conscience than a schismatic break with Rome." Lescoeur, "L'Eglise Catholique et le Gouvernement Russe," Paris, 1860, new edition, 1903 (Librairie Plon), a work that only needs an Index to be an excellent account of the dealings of the imperial Russian chancery with the Holy See from the first partition of Poland to the year 1875. The author says (p. 1): "On aurait pu le prolonger et le continuer jusqu'à ce jour: car malgré la différence profonde des temps, nombre de justes griefs sont restées les mêmes ou se sont renouvelées. Il en serait bientôt tout autrement si une législation



The first partition of Poland brought to Catharine, among other territories, that of Little Russia, and with it 1,800,000 souls, mostly united Ruthenians belonging to the diocese of Polock, one of the suffragans of Kiew, to which metropolitan church there were subject at the time Lemburg and Przemysl with a part of Chelm. The latter districts had the good fortune to fall to Austria, and as a result there are yet in Austrian Poland some 3,000,000 Ruthenian Catholics, with nearly 400,000 in Hungary. Poland herself for a while held the metropolitan church of Kiew with several suffragan dioceses. However, with an insignificant exception, the remainder of the Ruthenian Catholics fell to Russia in the course of the second and third partitions. This population, more genuinely Slav in blood, habits and speech than any other part of Russia, had been reconciled with Rome by the Union of Brest in 1595, thereby re-knitting old ties of union that dated from the tenth or the eleventh century and had been interrupted only by the malice and hatred of the clergy of Constantinople during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>21</sup> The lands of Little Russia had fallen to Poland by conquest in the course of the sixteenth century. In 1720 the famous Synod of Zamoisc (in Lithuania) had regularized their ecclesiastical affairs and relations, though in the years immediately preceding the first partition of the kingdom the metropolitans of Kiew had not been always worthy of their office. Moreover, the

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nouvelle venait à se créer plus conforme à l'esprit nouveau." I have drawn largely on it for the documents and for several appreciations in the preceding pages.

<sup>21</sup> Many important ancient documents concerning the original relations between Rome and the Slavs are found in Thelner, "Vetera Monumenta historiam Poloniæ et Lituaniæ illustrantia," 2 vols. fol. Rome, 1860; also in Bielowski, "Monumenta Poloniæ Historica," vol. I; cf. Frind, "Kirchengeschichte Boehmens," Prague, 2 vols., 1862-1866. Two admirable works of Tondini resume for the general reader much ancient ecclesiastical history of the Slavs: "La Primauté de S. Pierre prouvée par les titres que lui donne l'Eglise Russe dans sa liturgie," Paris, 1867; "Le Pape de Rome et les papes de l'Eglise Orthodoxe," Paris, 1874; cf. also Dom Guépin, "Saint Josephat Kuncewitch, archevêque de Polock, martyr de l'unité catholique et l'Eglise Grecque unie en Pologne," Paris, 1874. The studies of the Bolianists on the lives of some of the earlier Slav saints illustrate quite fully this point of history, e. g., "Diss. de conversione Russorum," in Acta Sanctorum for September (vol. II.). The pages of De Malstre in the "Soirées de St. Peterbourg" on this subject remain always authoritative and convincing. Cf. Lescoeur op. cit., pp. 523-528. Lengenich, "Dissert de religionis christianæ in Polonia initiis," Cracow, 1734; Leporowski, "De primis episcopatibus in Polonia conditis," Herbipol, 1874. Bonet-Maury, "Les premiers témoignages de l'introduction du christianisme en Russie" (Revue de l'histoire des religions), 1901, p. 223, sq. Palmieri, "La Conversione del Russi al cristianesimo la testimonianza di Fozio," in Studi Religiosi, 1901, p. 153 sq. Veredière, "Origines Catholiques de l'Eglise Russe," in *Études de Théologie* (Paris, 1857, II., 133 sq.), and *ibid* Gagarine, II., 75; Hergenroether-Kirsch, "Kirchengeschichte" (ed. 1904), II., 280-286.

Russians, often quartered upon their territory, had made clearly known the fate reserved to the Catholics once they were gathered under the sceptre of "divine" Catharine and her successors.

After the first partition Catharine forbade her Ruthenians all communication with Rome and even with their old metropolitan church of Kiew (being yet a part of Poland). It was only in 1795, however, when the last spark of Polish independence was extinguished that she began her barbarous work of exterminating Roman Catholicism. Here, too, her most useful agent was Siestrenczewicz, "a man who caused more damage to the Catholic Church of both rites in Russia than all the schismatics."<sup>22</sup> But her immediate instrument was Stephen Bulgari, a Greek adventurer from Corfu and a one-time friend and courtier of Frederick II., from whose service he had passed to that of Catharine. He proposed the establishment among the Ruthenians of a college of Russian "Popes" under a Greek Bishop. The suggestion was acted upon, the missionary college was richly endowed and Victor Sardowski, archimandrite of Sluck, made its first president. At once throughout the extent of the ancient metropolitan district of Kiew began endless acts of violence, deception and cruelty. All the old Ruthenian sees on Russian territory were suppressed, with the exception of the archiepiscopal see of Polock, the Bishops deposed and banished; with particular hatred it was decreed that Kiew should never more be an episcopal see. Its last metropolitan died at St. Petersburg in 1798, a pensioner of the Czar, two years after the death, in the same place and estate, of the last King of Poland! The former Catholic parishes were converted wholesale by force and by lies, the priests were exiled or abused and their families divided and persecuted. Catharine wrote the Pope that the people were free to choose their own pastors. She did not say that this was done by the village authorities, and that the latter were compelled to act as the Russian State dictated to them. All churches that had been built before the union with Rome in 1595 were declared Russian churches, and their populations incorporated with the State church. It was decreed that no new parish could be founded unless it counted one hundred "hearths;" and that all parishes below that number would be considered as integrant parts of the Russian Church. As the villages of these territories are thinly peopled, the result was a general destruction of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system. The parishes were broken up, the churches confiscated or abandoned, the priests driven away and often ruined by the confiscation or forced sale of their property. It became impossible for the Ruthenian Catholics to attend their few churches in the winter, by reason of the great distances that separated them. And all this time the heavy hand of Siestrenczewicz was oppressing everywhere through-

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<sup>22</sup> Fr. Neher in Wetzer and Welte, "Kirchenlexicon," VII, p. 442.

out the land the Basilian Uniat monasteries in the name of a higher secularized education, while the Ruthenian Catholics of his vast diocese were perishing for want of a defender. All this time he was flattering the Empress and defying the Pope and excogitating fresh schemes for enslaving the Latins and compelling the Uniats into the deathly schism they had happily escaped from. Catharine did not live to finish her work; she died in 1796, three years after the treaty of Grodno. Those three years, however, were enough to reduce the number of Ruthenian parishes in the dioceses of Kiew, Luczk, Kamienitz and Wladimir from five thousand to one thousand. She withdrew from the Roman obedience eight millions, and was therefore, since Martin Luther, the most successful enemy of Roman Catholicism; all the more so as with regard to our religion it is her principles, precedents, laws and spirit that have ever since dominated in the land of the Muscovite<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The reign of Catharine II. marks the first period and, so to speak, the first act of the long drama of religious oppression which began for Poland on the day of her national downfall, a drama that is being daily unrolled and always, despite the differences of men and times, with the same characteristics above, an unintelligent russophile patriotism, kept alive by the statesmen who make use of "Pravoslav" fanaticism as a means of paralyzing the best intentions of their master, below, an army of subaltern agents, violent men of shameless cunning and often of savage cruelty. . . . The legislation of Catharine II. and her executive measures have remained the finished type and unchangeable model for all attempts at the annihilation of the faith of Catholic Poland. Père Lescoeur, *op. cit.* pp. 13-17.