

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

THE EDITOR.

SOBIESKI AND THE RELIEF OF VIENNA.

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

their direct gaze, were accustomed to command, and indeed, those about him at this hour, Princes of the great houses of Europe, deferred to him. For he was a King as well as a renowned Captain. When he had surveyed the ground over which the coming action was to be contested, he again looked towards the city, clear now in the early sunlight. And from the ramparts the sentries of the depleted and exhausted garrison, who had seen the rockets of the relieving force during the hours of darkness, strained their eyes for some glimpse of their deliverers. They saw that the defiles and gorges leading out of the hills were blocked by Turkish troops, and it was not known whether John Sobieski himself was with the allied forces. But the horseman on the Kahlenberg was Sobieski, the hope of Europe in that hour of destiny.

Sobieski had heard Mass in a chapel of the hills, surrounded by the chivalry of the West: Lorraine, Eugene of Savoy, the Princes of the German States, Knights of Malta, the Irish exile Taaffe, French and Italian noblemen whose names were history. All had followed the last crusader, proud to serve under him; and now, conspicuous in his sky-blue tunic, he knelt and bowed his head while the Capuchin chaplain of the Austrian Emperor blessed his army. He then addressed those about him, saying, 'We have to save to-day not a single city, but the whole of Christendom, of which that city of Vienna is the bulwark.'

His words were no figure of rhetoric. What was decided upon this memorable day was the fate of Europe. The last great Mahomedan invasion had rolled up the Danube, with a cloud of Tartar horsemen clearing the way before it. The stroke had been swift, and at the very gates of Vienna the best soldiers of Mahomet IV. menaced the Milanese and Rome, Bavaria and the Rhineland. His empire, comprising Western Asia, Northern Africa and the most of Eastern Europe, was united in purpose, whereas Christendom was divided by the Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel. Louis XIV. and the Emperor Leopold were entangled in the web of secret diplomacy, the one encouraging the Turks to attack Austria, the other attempting to divert the Turkish attack to Poland. The emissaries of Pope Innocent XI., who were preaching a crusade against Islam, knew that only one man could be relied upon to look beyond his immediate interests, and to act as the champion of beleaguered Europe: Sobieski, the leader whom the Turks feared, the soldier, whose youth and manhood had been dedicated to the defence of Europe far away in the Eastern marches, where the hordes of Asia were ever ready to strike. But a life of campaigning had made the Polish King prematurely old, and the factious noblemen of his own country em-

ployed all his time. He might have sent a Polish contingent to the allied army. But those who implored his help needed above all his presence on the battlefield, at the head of the incomparable Polish cavalry. The mere rumour, diligently spread by those agents of Louis XIV. who had failed to buy Polish neutrality, that Sobieski was too old and too ill to ride to the rescue of Vienna, encouraged the Turks to slacken their effort at a critical moment. They could have taken Vienna at the first onrush, but if the Polish King refused to march, there was no hurry. All Europe believed the rumour, except Innocent XI., and Vienna was regarded as doomed.

The little garrison in Vienna had expected that Kara Mustapha would advance slowly, capturing the fortified towns in his way, garrisoning them, and organizing his conquests. The preparations for the advance had not been concealed. It was known that stores were being accumulated in Adrianople in the years preceding 1683, and that the armies were gathering. The assault on Vienna itself was not expected until 1684. But the Vizier paid no attention to the towns or fortresses in the path of his advance. He went straight ahead, and when he was supposed to be in the neighbourhood of Belgrade he was already at Raab (to-day Győr) in Hungary. The Emperor and his family and suite fled from the capital on July 7th, and only just evaded the Tartar cavalry, who rode in every direction, burning and harrying. Already the Suabian forests and the Franconian uplands were filled with German fugitives on their way to the Rhine. Meanwhile, on July 10th the main Turkish host crossed the Austrian frontier, burning and destroying whatever had escaped the notice of the Tartars. The sentries on the towers of the Cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna saw on the eastern horizon a huge semicircle of flame and smoke which drew nearer every hour, as the Turks closed in on the city. But at the critical moment, when his generals were expecting the order to assault Vienna, and when the despairing defenders had lined the ramparts, an inexplicable oriental languor came over Kara Mustapha, and he settled down to a siege. He built himself pleasure gardens, and established the private zoological collection which he had brought with him. Sobieski was still at Wianov, his palace outside Warsaw, mobilizing his noblemen, and awaiting the levies from his frontiers. There appeared to be no danger of the Turkish plan miscarrying. The only real danger had been the possibility of Sobieski's arrival in person. Of that there was now no fear.

The sudden inactivity after the rapid advance to the walls of Vienna had a demoralising effect of the Turks. Discontent developed into sporadic mutinies, until the Vizier realized that he must

shake off his sloth. At the beginning of September German contingents were arriving every day higher up the Danube, and the siege began in earnest. Kara Mustapha awoke, and a series of violent assaults on the city reduced the garrison to desperate straits. Innocent XI. ordered the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in all the churches of Christendom. The Cardinals at Rome sold their plate and their glass and their pictures to provide money for the relief. The King of Spain followed their example. All over Italy there were pilgrimages and demonstrations. Before July was over Leopold had offered Sobieski the Crown of Hungary, and received the reply that the Polish King desired no reward but to deserve well of God and man.

On the Feast of the Assumption Sobieski made the Stations in all the churches of Cracow, and rode out of the ancient Polish capital along the Silesian route. He came across Moravia into Austria with his Poles, and in the last hour of the all-day battle led the decisive charge of the Polish cavalry. The might of Islam was broken on land in the gates of Vienna, as it had been broken by sea at Lepanto.

The battle was fought across that hilly ground beneath the Kahlenberg which is to-day a maze of vineyards and villas. Sobieski had some 80,000 men, 18,000 of whom were Poles. Against him the Turks could employ nearly 200,000 troops. They blocked the approaches to Vienna on a front of four miles. In these circumstances the opening stage of the fighting was a thrust among the foothills, on a terrain much easier to defend than to attack. The Turks made use of every fold in the ground for a stubborn resistance, and frequently counter-attacked. But slowly and surely the Christian army advanced, and village after village was taken. The allies had marched down from the Kahlenberg in column, deploying as they reached the foothills, and a glance at the obstacles before him satisfied Sobieski that it would be a two-day battle. However, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, after some three hours of the slow advance, the King decided that Vienna could be relieved by night-fall. About midday, under a blazing sun, the whole line was engaged, from Nussdorf on the left, where Lorraine and his Germans drove back the Pacha of Mesopotamia, to Dornbach on the right, where Sobieski himself commanded Bavarians and Poles. In the centre the Vizier, Kara Mustapha, gave ground before Maximilian of Bavaria. Exhausted, but inspired by their leader, the allies fought on through the heat of the day, until, from a rise of ground they saw the enormous city of tents which the Turks had pitched outside Vienna. Those in the centre of the line presently came within

view of the magnificent tent of the Vizier, and his huge green standard, embroidered with golden crescents. Kara Mustapha was reclining in his tent, drinking coffee, little imagining that after such fighting the allies would press on, and confident that the ravine which protected the encampment could not be crossed without many more hours of combat. But Sobieski had made his decision. He rode across to the centre of the line, and took command, and the cry 'Vivat Sobieski!' was raised everywhere as he passed. Between five and six o'clock in the evening the Polish cavalry formed and the bugles sounded the charge.

It was the hour of Europe's deliverance, and it was fitting that the onslaught which decided the day should be made by the illustrious warrior-king, at the head of those proud horsemen who had for so long held the Polish outpost of Christendom; noblemen hardened in ceaseless warfare against the marauding Tartars on the plains of Volhynia and Podolia. The Turkish leaders, disposing their men to meet the shock, saw the majestic figure in the sky-blue tunic, and marked the royal standard which was borne before him, and Kara Mustapha, crying out in rage and despair to the Khan of the Crim Tartars, received the reply: 'I know the King of Poland. I told you that, should he come, there would be nothing left for us but retreat.' The Vizier tried to rally his forces, but these Polish charges were already legendary, and disorder quickly became panic. Lorraine turned the right wing, Jablonowski the left, and the thud of the Polish horses changed to thunder as they swept nearer the already breaking centre.

Behind the King rode the squadrons in their splendid accoutrement; gleaming cuirasse, crimson saddle, panther-skin slung from the left shoulder and falling to the right thigh, gilded lance, harness ornamented with bejewelled plaques of gold and silver, and affixed to their shoulders the eagle-wings which caught the wind of their onrush, and roared above the sound of the hoofs. At their heels pressed the Pancernes in their coats of mail. Nothing withstood them. Before darkness fell the dragoons of Louis of Baden rode through the battered remnant of the Scottish gate to the acclamation of a garrison closely beset for sixty days. Sobieski himself drew rein outside the Vizier's tent, where a slave held ready his master's horse. But that master had fled. One of his golden spurs was despatched to the Queen of Poland.

Islam never retrieved what was lost upon that day, the dream of placing the crescent on St. Peter's at Rome and dividing Europe into Turkish provinces. A man had been found so steeped in reality, so conscious of his mission, so informed with a vision of Christen-

dom as the eternal guardian of the Faith, that he rose above the degradations of his day, and ignored, at a moment of crisis, the intrigue and chicane of ignoble statesmen and shortsighted sovereigns.

From that moment dates the decline of the Ottoman Empire, but Sobieski's triumph was not as complete as it might have been. The Emperor Leopold, as soon as his capital was secure, showed the unpleasant side of his character. The personal popularity of the King of Poland, and the fact that it was he who was justly acclaimed as the saviour of the West, made Leopold not only jealous of his glory, but afraid of any possible increase in his power. His grudging and petty spirit discouraged Sobieski just when the Polish King foresaw the disintegration of his own country. Even his wife was intriguing against him, and the noblemen were clamouring to be led back to their homes. But the King determined to carry through the campaign to the end, and he went down the Danube, liberating towns, converting mosques into churches and establishing the Mass in places which had been in Moslem hands for a hundred and fifty years. When he turned finally towards Poland, in 1684, he knew that his work was not complete. There came a moment when the Pope's crusade was almost realised. The Maltese galleys sailed into the Aegean, Lorraine advanced along the Danube, the Venetians bombarded the Dalmatian coast, the tribes of the Balkans rose against the Porte. But the great leader himself was thwarted by the quarrels of his generals and his noblemen, and his last years were embittered by sordid squabbling. He did not live to see the victory of Zenta, but he had been its architect. And the effect of Vienna has remained as an inspiration to Europe. The dead King rode at Pilsudski's bridle-rein when, nearly two hundred and forty years later, Poland once more saved Europe at the battle of the Vistula, and drove back the Bolshevik invaders. He will be with the allied armies to-morrow when they deliver his country from the German oppressors. 'We have to save to-day, not a single country, but the whole of Christendom.'

J. B. MORTON.