

## The papacy and the birth of the Polish-Russian hatred

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For Anti memory of Piotr Skarga

**Pope Paul V (1605-1621), began his pontificate by pushing Poland for anti-Russian dymitriads, one of the most stupid and most tragic episodes of our history, and ended it when his circulatory system sustained a joyous overload during the procession in honor of the massacre of Czechs in the Thirty Years' War.**

The participation of the Papacy and the Jesuits in the tragic Polish anti-Russian rows is usually passed over in silence. For Russia's resurgent power it was a historically traumatic event that put a strain on the entire subsequent Polish-Russian relationships, and should never be ignored while remembrance of the partitions of Poland. When in 2005 Russia replaced their old national holiday commemorating the outbreak of the October Revolution with the Day of National Unity commemorating the liberation of Moscow from the Poles in Russia in 1612, the Vatican expressed concern that it could be of the anti-Catholic nature. The Pope must have worried whether the invasion of Poles and their trampling of the native culture would not be an opportunity to recall that it had been a formal crusade and the invasion aimed at making Russia Catholic again.

### Polish-Muscovite War called Dmitriads

Polish occupation of Moscow was preceded by Dmitriads, i.e. the Polish-papal attempts to enthrone the usurpers of the throne of Moscow, called False Dmitriys. In the final stage of the Dmitriads, the Polish invasion and the Polish-Muscovite War (1609-1618) took place. Pope Paul V committed himself to this project and shortly after the conclave, he played an important role in it. [1] It is not clear under what circumstances the alleged son of Ivan the Terrible turned up in Poland but it is distinctive that the first mention of him appeared on 1 st November 1603 in the Nuncio Claudio Rangoni's letter to Pope Clement VIII. [2] The case then went to the Roman Inquisition and Camillo Borghese who worked on it and who was due to become the new Pope one and a half years later.

A few months later the False turned up before the king in Krakow, trying to convince Sigismund III Vasa to support his trip to Moscow. He agreed to marry and enthrone the daughter of the governor of Sandomierz as a tsarina. This initiative met with a devastating critique of the Polish statesman Jan Zamoyski, who considered the project of enthroning Maryna Mniszech as a tsarina worthy of Plautus's comedy. As a result, Parliament unanimously rejected the idea of Polish involvement in this row.

The matter would certainly have been over if the nuncio and Jesuits had not engaged in it. The primate Jan Tarnowski and the Jesuits's protector the bishop of Krakow, the later primate Bernard Maciejowski, persuaded the king to consider the Usurper favourably. [3] It was then that the conversion of the Usurper to Catholicism was agreed. The Jesuits baptised him on 17 th April 1604. On 24 th April the nuncio gave the new „sheep" Communion and Confirmation. On the very same day the convert wrote to the pope promising him to make Russia Catholic and to organise a crusade against the Turks. In the view of Parliament's refusal the governor of Sandomierz organised advenurous troops with the Jesuits' support as chaplains. [5]

Several days after the conclave a letter from Rome was sent to the nuncio requesting him for

a detailed report on the progress of the campaign of Dmitry and the Polish king's relationship towards him. Soon after that, the usurper triumphantly entered Russia. He was promised to have a triumphant fresco in the Sala Regia of Vatican. Shortly after the coronation of the new tsar, the Pope sent some official letters to: Sigismund III, Cardinal Maciejowski and the governor of Sandomierz asking them to give the new ruler of Russia all necessary assistance in the „restoration of Muscovites to Church". It turned out, however, that the Polish king's support for the campaign was smaller than the Jesuits were presenting it to the Pope because the king did not want to recognise the Tsar title of Dmitry.

Russia's new tsar established diplomatic relations only with the Vatican. On 11 th September 1605 the Pope sent him a congratulatory letter on the occasion of the coronation again reminding him of the task he was to do. In reply to the Pope's letter, the tsar outlined his project in which he said that he would like to move with the emperor and the king of Poland on a crusade against Turks. However, in order to do so, the Pope has to urge the Polish king and send a few military experts. Paul V promised to do his best.

After some time, however, the tsar stated that his religious mission was beyond his capabilities. Polish Catholics acted in Moscow as in a conquered territory. The Pope began to lose his patience, and asked the tsar to declare war on Turkey himself and war nuncios would send the message about the war all over Europe. [6] After 11 months of the usurper's rule, boyars made a successful plot on his life. Also at the same time a massacre of several hundred of Poles was committed. The usurper's body was put into the cannon and fired in the direction of Poland, but it rather should have flown to the Vatican.

The Jesuits soon began to proclaim that Dmitry had been able to escape, thus preparing the ground for a new Dmitriad. The new papal nuncio in Poland Simonetta tackled the issue. The Vatican sustained that belief. The new Dmitry Usurper started operations from July 1607, again supported by the Polish army. Maryna Mniszech publicly „recognized" her husband in him. There were no promises, however, to convert Russians.

## Rebellion

Then the Jesuits started to have hard times in Poland. The nobles formed the Rebellion of Sandomierz against the king, and one of its main blades was aimed at the Jesuits. It was claimed that under the Jesuits's influence the king was discriminating people of different faith — dissenters, Protestants by giving wealth, dignity, offices and constantly blocking the issue of implementing regulations for Warsaw Confederation that introduced tolerance in Poland as well as was not responding to religious riots mainly inspired, anyway, by the Jesuits themselves. Nobility were also worried about a shift in international policy and rapprochement with the Habsburgs, who had been fighting the so-called Long War under the patronage of „Holy Father" for several years against Turkey, which meant involvement of Poland in the crusade against the Turks to which the church state was pushing by granting dispensation to the Polish king to marry his former wife's sister Constance of Austria. The Pope considered the marriage „a thing enormously helpful to Christianity" [7]. Soon Constance became the „main ensign of militant Catholicism" (Jasienica) cooperating with Piotr Skarga in this work. In 1606 Piotr Skarga published a propaganda pamphlet for the formation of a Christian knight (Soldier devotion). Later history showed that the nobility's concerns were justified as Poland engaged in a costly war against Turkey after finishing the war with Moscow.



1. Sigismund III Column in Castle Square in Warsaw is one of the most emblematic monuments of the capital city. The king of the big cross and the sword well reflect the policy of the monarch

Not without reason Sigismund III was called „the Jesuit king." The main direction of his policy in Poland making a sharp Counter Reformation course was attributed to the Jesuits, in particular to the Royal preacher, illustrious Piotr Skarga. The papal diplomat and a Jesuit Antonio Possevino (he supported the first Dmitry Usurper), did not value the Polish ruler's intellectual assets much. According to Antonio Possevino, the Polish ruler was „ of a slow wit and languid, not too smart temper". From the very start of his reign Piotr Skarga as his court preacher cared about himm spiritually rousing Catholic fundamentalism in him.

Catholic historiography presents the rebellion of nobility as a movement to maintain anarchic „golden freedom", a rebellion against strengthening of royal power which could improve the Republic. Except that this „improvement" meant suppressing Protestantism by force and next involving in the European Counter Reformatory policy and the crusade against Turkey. On the one hand, these were „petty" interests of noblemen. On the other hand, that was the Pope's Counter Reformatory and crusade policy. King Sigismund himself wanted to strengthen his power in order to gain the throne of native Sweden. Prince Władysław who was crowned during his father's lifetime and a governor ruling instead of him would stay in the country...as an Austrian Archduke.

Sweden, of course, could be conquered and brought back to fidelity of Rome. Help would be given by Moscow conquered by the Usurper and induced to accept Catholicism. In this way a great northern league capable of effective actions against the Turks.would come into being. Intentions were huge and chimerical (...) His Majesty the King „did not want to content himself with our nation. He strove for total victory of Catholicism in the whole Europe distroying ethical integrity of the state that had been reliable for ages, and for the Swedish crown for himself. The Republic was supposed to comply with all those aims and serve like a springboard" (Paweł Jasienica). The anti-royal opposition fought with such a trend.

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