

RISE AND FALL OF POLAND.

An historical résumé showing how Poland attained its frontiers of 1772; how it came to be dismembered, and what its position is under the present public law of Europe.

Nestor of Kieff, an early Slavonian chronicler, states, that the SLAVONIANS established on the Danube, after having been expelled in the VIth century, by the Gauls or Valachians, settled between the Vistula and the Dnieper under the general name of Lechs, although some were called Mazovians, others Pomeranians, others Loothish, others—especially those settled on the Vistula—were called Polans (from *pole* plains), whence the name of Poland is derived. Unity of race and language was maintained among those different branches of Slavonians until the IXth century, when the Normans (called Ross or Russ, from Rosslagen, in Sweden, whence they migrated)* conquered Eastern Slavonia on the Dnieper, and gave it the name of Russia, in Latin, Ruthenia. They made Kieff their Capital, and formed an important state called the *Grand Duchy of Russia*, which, however, soon split into several *Russian Duchies*. One of the Russian Dukes conquered Moscow, and substituted to the name of *Muscovy* that of *Great Russia*. In the XIIIth century, the Tartar-Mongols having invaded both Muscovy and the Russian Duchies, the Tsar of Great Russia (Muscovy) remained their Vassal during the following two centuries.

Early in the XIVth century GEDYMIN, Grand Duke of Lithuania, expelled the Tartars from the whole of Russia (Ruthenia) up to the Black Sea, and added to his title that of Grand Duke of Russia, which, with Yagiello, became one of the titles attached to the crown of Poland, and remained as long as that crown remained independent.

But nevertheless, about the end of the XVth century, the title of "Tsar of all the Russias" was also assumed by BAZIL of Muscovy, after freeing himself of the yoke of the Tartar-Mongols,—though he, at that time, was not yet in possession of any part of the territory originally called *Rooss*, or Russia.

Of the history of the POLANS, now called Poles, during the first three centuries of their existence we know little, except that in the middle of the IXth century they were governed by a race of princes named Piasts, whose dynasty finished with Hedviga in 1385.

963—992. MICISLAUS, first christian king of the Polans, reigned over what was afterwards called *Great Poland*, about 15,000 square miles, comprising the country round Posen, Gnezno, and Mazovia with its capital Warsaw.

992—1025. BOLESLAUS extended his dominions and the christian faith over *Little Poland*, i.e. the Duchies of Cracow and Sandimir.

1334—1370. KAZIMIR III, THE GREAT, inherited, 1340, by the death of his nephew, the Duchy of Halicz, being the Western part of *Red Russia*, or *Halicia* (now Eastern Galicia). He took possession of it at the request of the notables of that country, who were threatened by the Tartars. The Eastern part of *Red Russia*, i.e. Volhynia and Podolia, went to Lubar, son of Gedimin, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Russia, who, having expelled the Tartars from all the country between the Baltic and the Black Sea, remained in possession of what, since the invasion of the Russian Vargies, went by the name of the Russian Duchies.†

1386—1434. LADISLAUS YAGIELLO, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Russia, embraced christianity, and married Hedviga, Queen of Poland, by which he united the Duchy of Lithuania to Poland, and became king of the united country and founder of the dynasty of the Yagiellos.

1444—1492. KAZIMIR IV, King of Poland and Lithuania, was requested by the Prussians to protect them against the Teutonic Knights of the Cross, by whom they had been conquered in the thirteenth century. This appeal of the Prussians involved the King of Poland in a war with the Knights, which lasted twelve years, and at the end of which, by the Treaty of Thorn, 1466, *Western Prussia* with Dantzic, was by the Knights ceded to the King of Poland, and henceforth called *Royal Prussia*, whilst *Eastern Prussia* remained to the Knights, vassal of Poland.

1506—1548. SIGISMUND I allowed his grandson Albert of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Knights of the Cross, to become Duke or Elector of *Eastern Prussia*, henceforth called *Ducal or Electoral Prussia*, the Grand Master remaining vassal to Poland.‡

1548—1574. SIGISMUND AUGUSTUS II, requested by the Teutonic Knights of the Sword (who had settled since the thirteenth century in Livonia, Esthonia, and Curland) to protect them against the invasions of Ivan the Terrible, of Muscovy, received from them in 1561, by the Treaty of Vilna, Livonia and Esthonia. The latter province, however, not finding itself sufficiently protected by Poland against Muscovy, united itself to Sweden.

* They were also known by the name of Vargies. Of the origin of this name nothing positive is known; but it has sometimes been supposed, that as the Normans gave their name of Ross to the conquered people, they may in turn have received from them, that of Varg. Vor in Slavonian meaning robber, plunderer.

† Under the same reign, in 1347, a university was founded at Cracow, the first in Eastern Europe.

‡ In 1657, this Duchy, freed from its vassalage by the King of Poland, John Kazimir, was united with that of Brandenburg; it was recognised as the Kingdom of Prussia under Frederick I, in 1701.

POLAND

"as it existed before 1772."

(Art. 14 of General Treaty 1815)



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Green — The portion of Ancient Poland now in the possession of Russia.
 Blue — Prussia.
 Yellow — Austria.



Thus, were the frontiers of Poland, from the tenth to the sixteenth century, constantly extended either by marriage, or by the voluntary adhesion of the neighbouring people coming to Poland for the enjoyment of milder laws, greater civil and religious liberty, and protection against Moscovites, Turks, and Tartars. And such her frontiers steadily remained until the first partition, in 1773; emitting mere temporary changes of possession, caused, on either side, by the chances of war. By one of these, *Pomerania* became part of Poland from 994 till 1308; *Silesia* from 992 till 1163, when Boleslaus IV formed it into a separate Duchy, and gave it to his nephew.

The Hungarians, menaced by the Turks, chose the King of Poland, Ladislaus, to be King of Hungary (1440); and after his death, at the battle of Varna with the Turks, his nephew Ladislaus, son of Kazimir, was crowned King of Hungary. In 1471, the Bohemians offered their crown to the same Prince, who thus became in those two countries founder of the Yagiellon dynasty.

Smolensk being taken by Tsar Vassil, in 1314, was the cause of a war with Muscovy, in which Sigismund III. captured Moscow, and was offered the Imperial Crown for his son; he declined the offer, continued the war, lost Moscow, but retained Smolensk.

1600—1700. During all the seventeenth century Poland was constantly invaded by Muscovites, Turks, and Swedes. The revolt of the Ukraine, which, after applying to Muscovy for protection against Poland, again returned voluntarily to Poland, became the pretext for a long war with Muscovy.

The repeated invasions of Sweden arose out of the election to the throne of Poland of the Swedish prince, Sigismund Vasa, as successor of the Yagiellons—the last female of that dynasty having married into the Swedish family. John Kazimir, second son of Sigismund, died without issue, 1680. From that time the Crown of Poland became elective, without any reference to former dynasties.

Two wars were undertaken to rescue Vienna, one against the Prince of Transylvania who besieged it in 1619, the other against the Turks in 1683, by John Sobieski, "*in favorem Christianitatis*."

These exertions, together with the foreign intrigues to which the elections of the kings gave rise, and the domestic dissensions they fomented, weakened Poland to such a degree that, after having several times lost and conquered Smolensk and all the left shore of the Dnieper, she finally ceded them to the Tsar, while she abandoned Livonia to Sweden.

A truce between Poland and Muscovy in 1667, confirmed by the treaty of Andrushoff in 1686, fixed the limits which were respected on both sides until 1772, when the first partition took place.

1762. FREDERIC AUGUSTUS III, having recognised the kingdom of Prussia, the King of Prussia, Frederic II, assured the King of Poland of his gratitude and friendship. In the same year, Frederic signed a treaty with Catherine to prevent "by all the means in their power" Poland returning to hereditary monarchy, or making any alterations in her constitution and doing away with the *liberum veto* by which no change in any fundamental law could be effected unless unanimously voted.

1764. STANISLAS PONIATOWSKI. Catherine II, Tsarine of Muscovy, assumed *officially* the title (previously taken by Tsar Basil) of Sovereign of all the Russias.† King Stanislas recognised that title on the express declaration of Catherine, that it was not to imply any right to the Russian or Ruthenian Provinces belonging to Lithuania and Poland, either for herself, her successors, or her Empire. This engagement had already been taken in 1634, by Tsar Basil.

1773. Catherine II agreed with Austria and Prussia to dismember Poland, and after publishing, in common with those courts, a manifesto to that effect, invaded *White Russia* (Witebsk), while Austria seized a part of *Red Russia* (Halitch), and Prussia took *Royal Prussia*, with the exception of Thorn and Dantzic. This was the **FIRST PARTITION**, as marked on the accompanying map.

1790. The King of Prussia signed with Poland a defensive treaty against Russia, in case the latter attempted to interfere with the internal reforms which the Polish Diet was endeavouring to effect. The King of Prussia praised those reforms, and pledged himself to assist Poland against all foreign attacks.

1791. The Polish Diet, after having, during four years, laboured to reform abuses, and to allay the anarchy brought on mostly by the elections of kings, proclaimed on the 3rd of May, by a new constitutional charter,‡ Poland an hereditary monarchy; provided for the admission of all ranks to political rights; secured liberty of conscience; abolished the *liberum veto*, &c.

1793. The Tsarine, Catherine II, declared war against Poland; and Frederic, King of Prussia, who in 1790, at the suggestion of Great Britain, had signed with Poland a defensive treaty against Catherine, now joined the armies of the Tsarine against Poland. Catherine took possession of the palatinate of Minsk in *White Russia*, of Podolia and Volhynia in *Red Russia*, and of the Ukraine in *Black Russia*; the King of Prussia took possession of Posen, Kalish, Dantzic, and Thorn. Austria refused to take part in this, the **SECOND PARTITION** of Poland.

* Words used by Sobieski in one of his letters.

† Tsar Michel had also taken the title of King of Germany.

‡ of the Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, vol. IV., p. 479. Published by Francis and n, 1852.

1795. After an unsuccessful attempt of the Poles to reconquer their independence, ending in the defeat of Kosciuszko,—Wilna, Kovno, and Grodno fell to the Tsar; King Stanislas was sent a prisoner to Petersburg. Prussia took Warsaw and Bialystok; Austria took Cracow, Radom, Lublin and Siedlee. This is the **THIRD PARTITION** and final dismemberment of Poland.

1806. Polish Legions in the service of France accompanied Napoleon I when invading Prussia.

1807. By the Treaty of Tilsit, a part of Poland, wrested from Prussia, was made into the **Duchy of Warsaw**, under Frederic Augustus, King of Saxony and Duke of Warsaw. Another part, the district of Bialystok, was taken from Prussia and given to the Tsar.

1809. By the Treaty of Schoenbrunn, the Duchy of Warsaw was doubled in size, Austria restoring her share of the *third* partition, viz. Cracow, Radom, Lublin, and Zamosc.

1815. The **TREATY OF VIENNA** conferred the Duchy of Warsaw on Tsar Alexander I., as kingdom of Poland (see p. 28), with a constitution, a diet composed of two Houses, a distinct Polish administration, a Polish army, liberty of the press, &c.

Cracow was constituted a "free town under the protection of Austria, Prussia, and Russia." The rest of "Poland, within its limits of 1772, under the respective dominions of Austria, Prussia, and Russia," was to enjoy "representative institutions such as might best secure its nationality;"* and perfect "liberty of communication and commerce throughout the whole extent of ancient Poland," was promised to the Polish inhabitants, not, however, to Germans and Russians (Muscovites) considered, in that respect, as "foreigners." Thus, the "Poland" stipulated for by the Congress of Vienna is not, as is often erroneously supposed, limited to what now goes by the name of "Kingdom of Poland;" it embraces the whole of "the ancient Poland as it existed in the year 1772." (Art. 14 of the General Treaty of Vienna.) See p. 30.

1830. The violation of most of these engagements and the total non-execution of many of them, induced the Poles under the dominion of the Tsar to rise in arms. After ten months' resistance, they were conquered, and the whole of Russian (Muscovite) Poland was henceforth governed by martial law.

1839. Three millions of Catholic Ruthenians in *White, Red, and Black Russia* were forced into the official Muscovite church, by an order of the Tsar, enforced by persecution.

1846. The Free-town of Cracow was, by an agreement between its three protecting powers, deprived of its independence, and declared part of the Austrian Empire.

1848. The Grand Duchy of Posen, in violation of the Treaty of 1815, was incorporated by Prussia into the Germanic confederation, and henceforth governed as a German province. Its separate Diet was abolished, a German administration was introduced, and the Polish language replaced by the German, both in the public schools and in all official transactions.

1861. Repeated wholesale massacres at Warsaw. The state of siege successively proclaimed throughout the whole of Russian Poland.

1863. A forced conscription is followed by a general rising throughout Russian Poland, which now implicitly obeys an anonymous National Government, seated at Warsaw.

* Treaty between Prussia and Russia, annexed to the General Treaty of 1815.