

# Vatican City Paper Terms Russian Invasion Of Poland Cowardly Act on a False Pretext

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ROME, Sept. 18.—Russia's invasion of Poland is termed a cowardly act on a false pretext in a strong editorial of condemnation today by the Osservatore Romano. Equally strong is the newspaper's defense of Poland and its strictures on the menace to Catholicism represented by the war.

It is rare, indeed, for the Vatican City newspaper to take so positive a stand. Considering its close connections with the Papal Secretariat of State, one must take this as the nearest thing to a pronouncement of the Holy See's position that has yet been uttered. It is emphasized by the fact that August Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, arrived in Rome today and will see Pope Pius soon.

There can be no question of the Pontiff's grief horror over what has happened to Poland.

"The Soviet action has not come unexpectedly," writes Count Dalla Torre, director of the Osservatore Romano, in his editorial. "It was everywhere feared. But Russia choose a false pretext and a performed deed that was not courageous. \* \* \*

"While the world watches this spectacle with a heart that despairs of any remaining sentiment of re-

spect for promises, of homage to the right, and of civil generosity, it is asked whether beyond the avowed aims of Russia's warlike neutrality there are not others that may extend the flame of war and whether there is not some preparation to carry the struggle from the political and military field over to that of ideological, moral and social conquests. \* \* \*

"Recourse to force is beginning to unveil its incalculable fearful consequences. \* \* \* In seventeen days it has monstrously magnified and disfigured the situation. The sword drawn to cut a Gordian knot remains caught in a growing tangle. \* \* \* One of the saddest episodes in the political history of all times, which cannot be eradicated from the world's conscience after a century and a half, is being repeated.

"The end of Poland? No! Because the world has not forgotten Poland. Justice and human nobility proclaim it.

"It has been said that peoples who do not defend themselves do not deserve to live. It is all the more true, therefore, that those who do defend themselves do deserve life; and it is certain that Poland de-

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serves it doubly in her heroic double defense.

"It is felt and believed by all those who share the same holy faith as the Poles and know the danger that threatens Catholicism in the fate of their country. Such is the thought and light of the civilization of Europe and the world."

It was confirmed today that the Holy See would await developments and meanwhile continue its attitude of strictest impartiality. Nevertheless it seems most likely that if Germany and Russia do become allies in an ever-expanding war, the Vatican may feel constrained to take sides with Great Britain and France, as champions of Christianity against paganism and communism. This is a possibility that is causing much concern, since it is against the Catholic Church's tradition to take sides in such a great conflict. Moreover, any future peace or humanitarian moves by Pope Pius must be embarrassed by the fact that Russia has no representation at the Holy See and that there is no delegate of the Holy See in Moscow.

In Vatican circles today it was said that Pope Pius now felt his warning that "nothing is lost by peace, but everything can be lost by war" had been sensationally verified by Russian intervention.

Incidentally, the Osservatore Romano's circulation has jumped from 40,000 last month to 117,000 today. It is the only impartial newspaper in Italy.

## Pope Shares Sufferings

VATICAN CITY, Sept. 18 (UP)—Officials of the Vatican Secretariat

of State conferred today with the French, British, Rumanian and Polish envoys to the Holy See on the international situation.

Pope Pius is sleeping on the floor that he may participate more deeply in the world's suffering, a reliable Vatican source reported today. He also was reported to be fasting.

Those close to him since his coronation last Spring assert that he appears to be a changed man, looking more frail and saintly than before. It is reported he has cut his sleep to a few hours a night as a result of his almost constant prayers for peace.

The Russian invasion of Poland caused grief in Vatican circles yesterday. The Pope, who has worked steadily against a European war for years, immediately offered special prayers.

News of Russia's action reached the Pope at his Castel Gandolfo Summer retreat. Following his prayers, he summoned his acting Secretary of State, Mgr. Montini, serving for Luigi Cardinal Maglione, who is resting at Casoria.

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