

## The Heritage of Polish Republicanism

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Polish republican thought is virtually unknown in the intellectual world of Western Europe and America. One cannot find any information about Polish political thought, let alone the Polish practice of republicanism in the works of such thinkers as Quentin Skinner or John Pocock[1]—perhaps because its foundational works were written either in Latin or in Old Polish and have never been translated into modern European languages. Political writers began to use Polish in the mid-sixteenth century; before that the vernacular was used only when dealing with minor or inferior matters in the kingdom. The first political treatises in the Polish languages were the works of Stanisław Orzechowski (1564) and Marcin Kromer (1551); earlier, Latin was the language in which the Polish gentry (*szlachta*) expressed their political and sometimes private sentiments. In the sixteenth century Poland was one of the few countries in Europe where Latin was routinely taught in schools so that graduates acquired enough proficiency to communicate with each other in that tongue.

The second reason why Polish republican thought has not been recognized in contemporary republican discourse is the fact that Poland was a Kingdom, i.e., it had a king, and this made contemporary thinkers view political discourse in fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century Poland as monarchic and not republican. These researchers are wrong. In Polish political debates of half a millennium ago, monarchic ideas were always permeated with republicanism. In that period public discourse had civic virtue as its centerpiece. Even when the royal court and rich landlords tried to introduce monarchic values into the realm of politics, they had to use the language of republicanism owing to the republican sentiments of the Polish nobility. This process was particularly prominent in the seventeenth century, when oligarchic tendencies were manifested with great force. When new and rich magnate families began to appear in the *Res Publica* after the Union of Lublin in 1569 (the date of the political union between the Polish Kingdom and the Great Duchy of Lithuania), they gradually began replacing the old aristocratic families whose roots went

back to the Piast dynasty or the beginning of the Jagiellon dynasty in the early fifteenth century. In the process, they used and abused the language of republicanism to advance their personal goals. Thus while the language of republicanism never disappeared from Polish political discourse, it went unnoticed by outside observers who saw only the Polish monarchy on the one hand and selfish magnates on the other.

**The long-lasting process of implementing the idea that kings should rule by the citizens' consensus shaped the most important political institutions of the Polish state.**

The third reason why Polish republicanism has been neglected in past and present discussions of republicanism is the Polish historical experience, so radically different from that of Western Europe. During the times when the entire European continent from St. Petersburg to Paris worshipped the idea of the enlightened yet absolute monarchy, the Polish *Res Publica* was in a phase of political stagnation, even as its official discourse remained republican and not monarchistic. Later, when the ideas of the Enlightenment were being discussed in the salons of Prussia or France, Poles tried to implement reforms of their republican political system (The Great Assembly [*Sejm Wielki*] that culminated in the Third of May Constitution in 1791), but this process came to an abrupt halt due to the invasion of Poland by “enlightened” European rulers, an invasion that ended with the second partition (1793). The post-Enlightenment discourse condemned the Polish *Res Publica* and rhetorically classified it as a backward state (“Polish anarchy”), as a creature that was partly funny and partly scary. The Polish state was colonized by the three monarchies that took part in the third partition of Poland in 1795. Throughout Europe, scholars who specialized in the history of political thought treated the language of the imperial (colonial) powers as the authoritative descriptive language. However, as Edward Said has taught us, this kind of language is possessive rather than descriptive.[2]. Ignoring that fact has been a great mistake of European scholars with regard to Poland. In contemporary Poland, lengthy discussions highlight this mistake and the misunderstanding resulting from it.[3]

To outline the nature of the Polish state I will start with the basic features of the political discourse in the Polish-Lithuania-Ukrainian Commonwealth. First I discuss the political institution of *Res Publica Polona*, and second, I try to shed some light on the most important terms that are characteristic of Polish politics.

THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN OLD POLAND  
 In the fifteenth century political self-consciousness of the Polish gentry had already inspired a description of the political organization of the state as “mixed rule.” This system had been proposed by the founders of the Western philosophy of politics, Plato and Aristotle, as the best possible system comprising the finest aspects of monarchy, aristocracy, and *politheia* (the latter should not be confused with democracy, or the regime of the mob, according to Aristotle).[4] Classical political thought recognized that in all these systems virtue is the most important value, and without virtue it is impossible to establish laws of the political community. In every successful system the supremacy of law over power (of money, birth, or number) is a value that ensures that the state will flourish.[5]

The political shape of the Polish Commonwealth began to form after the death of the last king of the Piast dynasty, Casimir the Great, in 1370. As contemporary historians have pointed out, the Jagiellonian kings who succeeded the Piasts ruled by consensus of the gentry (as opposed to the aristocracy) and its representatives. “The electivity of the Polish throne constituted the foundation of the post-Piast regime. It was the source of contract between the future ruler and his subjects who expressed consent (*consensus*) to the taking of power by pretender to the throne, who in turn bonded himself to obey the conditions of the social agreement reached in this way.”[6] The long-lasting process of implementing this basic idea that kings should rule by the citizens’ consensus shaped the most important political institutions of the Polish state.

Władysław Jagiełło (Jogaila), originally the Great Duke of Lithuania, was the first Polish king of the Jagiellonian dynasty. He acquired the Polish crown by marrying the granddaughter of King Casimir the Great, Jadwiga (Hedwig) of Anjou (canonized as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church in 1997). After her death in 1399 King Władysław raised the question of continuity of his rule with the Royal Council, and before his coronation was obliged to confirm the Law of the Kingdom as mandatory for maintenance of his power. According to Polish historians, this chain of events gave birth to the system of free election of kings.

Historians have described the act of confirmation of the Kingdom’s law that the ruler was obliged to observe as a “social contract” characteristic of the Polish system of government from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Each of Władysław Jagiełło’s successors had to perform this act of commitment, and therefore the

governance of the *Res Publica* required the ability to compromise. The history of the monarchy in Poland shows that there were periods when harmony between ruler and law was thus achieved; this balancing act determined the dynamics and quality of monarchical power in the Kingdom. Here are some examples.

The first goes back to the fifteenth century, when Władysław’s son was born. In 1425 the king began to make efforts to obtain the right of succession for the adolescent prince. This action provoked resistance from the Royal Council, but the resistance did not concern the person of the adolescent successor but had to do with the process of assuming power: the prince was underage and could not legally confirm the Rights of the Kingdom. The process ended with a compromise.

A second and similar conflict occurred almost one hundred years later, when the Italian wife of Sigismund I, Bona Sforza, forced the election *vivente rege* (during the life of his father) of her beloved but underage son Sigismund August. This attempt to violate the law provoked civil defiance that forced the monarch to proclaim two very important acts. The first asserted that as soon as he became fifteen years old, the king-to-be he would confirm his intention to obey the laws of the Kingdom, and if he did not do it his subjects would be free to disobey his authority in spite of the fact that he had been crowned king. The second act had to do with the guarantee that the law of free election would be obeyed in the future: such an election could take place only after the death of the ruling king.

The third example is of historical importance: in 1573, after the death of the last of the Jagiellons Sigismund (Zygmunt) August, who produced no heir, it became necessary to choose an entirely new monarch. The gentry then formulated the so-called *pacta conventa*, or Henry’s Articles (Henry de Valois was the first king elected in the post-Jagiellonian election). Only after the signing of the Articles could the aspirer to the throne be considered a candidate. The *pacta conventa* consisted of key political agreements between the gentry and the king. If the monarch broke even one of them, his subjects had the right to denounce his authority. Among these articles is a declaration of religious tolerance and *neminem captivabimus*, or the right to not be imprisoned without due legal process.

A popular anecdote exists about Henry de Valois. He was reluctant to sign the articles in the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris in 1573. Then he heard the following from one of the Polish noblemen present: “*Non regnabis, si non iurabis*” (You will not rule if you do not obey our laws). Thus at the very outset the future

ruler had to negotiate his competence with representatives of the Polish gentry, and this shaped the special atmosphere of Polish political life and the political system of the Commonwealth.

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These and other rights, also called privileges, were gradually introduced into the Polish political system throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were confirmed in the process of negotiation between the monarch and his future subjects, and they were essential to the political order of the Kingdom. The so-called Czerwiński rights (granted to the gentry by King Władysław Jagiełło in 1422) forbade the seizure of citizens' property without a previous court sentence. The Jedlnia and Kraków rights (1430, 1433) stated that members of the gentry could not be imprisoned unless the court of law so ordered (this right is often referred to as *neminem captivabimus* and is similar to the English *Magna Carta* privileges issued in 1215). These citizens' rights established a real and formal suzerainty of law in the state that bonded every nobleman (*szlachcic*) as well as the monarch.

In 1422–23 the monarch also agreed to guarantee the independence of the local court (*sąd ziemski*) from the local administrative authority (*starosta*). This constitution started the long process of forming an independent jurisdiction in *Res Publica* which resulted in the foundation of the Royal Tribunal in 1578 as a supreme court for the majority of legal cases. The judges were deputies, i.e., representatives of the gentry elected by them and from among them.

A similar democratic process took place concerning religious tolerance in Poland. This was part of the articles signed by Henry de Valois and was voted into law by the Sejm. The so-called Warsaw Confederation (1573) guaranteed freedom of religious beliefs for Polish citizens, and obliged the monarch to obey this rule under the threat of disobedience to the ruler. This constitution was written by the noblemen of different religious denominations just before the first free election. At that time both Catholics and Protestants were aware of the disastrous effects of religious wars in Germany. While these religious wars raged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in several European

countries, the Polish *Res Publica* remained “a state without stakes” and accepted successive waves of religious fugitives, Jews (from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries), and Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century: Italian, French, German, and Czech.

The basic law concerning civil rights in Poland was proclaimed even earlier, in 1454, when the king conceded the principle that he would neither raise an army nor sign any new laws without the gentry of each province meeting at frequent intervals to conduct political and legislative business and to consider the king's proposals. This law gave noblemen a major influence on issues of war and peace, as well as the introduction of new laws. It also created problems: because of the size of the country and difficulties of communication before the electronic age, this kind of civic consultation was problematic. This gave a birth to the idea of the General Assembly known as the Sejm that began to meet regularly, beginning with 1493.

In 1505 the so-called *nihil novi*, one of the most important constitutions for the political order in the Kingdom, was proclaimed. It stated that new laws could be introduced only by the Sejm, and that three organs in the state had the privilege of legislative initiative: the monarch, the Senate, and the Sejm. The Senate was similar to the British House of Lords in that membership was determined by the privilege of titles, whereas members of the Sejm were elected from among free citizens, i.e., the gentry. Legislative power belonged to the Sejm but also to the *sejmiki* (local assemblies, or dietines). By the sixteenth century four types of sessions were held by the *sejmiki*: *sejmik poselski* (electing two envoys to transmit the instruction of the province's nobility to the Sejm); *sejmik deputacki* (electing two deputies to serve on the Crown Tribunal, or the judiciary); *sejmik relacyjny* (it met to consider reports and recommendations from the Sejm and to take appropriate action); and *sejmik gospodarski*, or an economic session (it met to administer trade and finance in the province, and to execute resolutions of the Sejm in relation to taxes, military service, and landholding).[7]

The gentry regarded themselves as the supreme authority in the state and considered the *sejmiki* to be the most important branch of the legislative apparatus. This decentralization of political power was typical of the Polish *Res Publica*. It influenced the political attitudes of the gentry, strengthening their sense of responsibility for the community but also fostering anarchistic tendencies in society. In this kind of society it was particularly important to emphasize the process

of creation and reinforcement of patriotic ideology and the republican language.

Let us now mention the most controversial of *Res Publica's* political institutions: the privilege of *liberum veto*. According to many historians, this political privilege caused fatal weakening of the Polish state in the second half of seventeenth century and was a major reason for Poland's political failure.[8] This is a disputable opinion. While *liberum veto* allowed one voice of objection to torpedo the whole work of the Sejm, the necessity of unanimity promoted the rule of the so-called "grind of the votes:" insubordinate voices had to be subdued in order to accept the decisions of the majority. Such arm-twisting (and therefore cooperation) had already been practiced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Also, with the use of *liberum veto* it was sometimes possible to oppose the magnates and the aristocracy who wanted laws that served their interests. *Liberum veto* created a unique dynamics of political life in the Commonwealth in which a crucial role was played by the political consciousness of the noblemen, their understanding of the tasks and goals of the political community, and their sense of social responsibility. In my opinion, *liberum veto* played an educational role from the fifteenth to the first half of seventeenth century. It stimulated members of the Sejm and confirmed **the classical republican doctrine about the dominance of virtue over power**. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, a political writer, Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro argued that thanks to *liberum veto* one wise man could stop a crowd of fools.

#### POLITICAL IDEALS OF THE *RES PUBLICA*

*Bonum publicum*, or the common good—this was the term used to define the state. It summarizes the concept of politics held in the "Republic of Nobles" that Poland was in those days. Such sixteenth-century political writers as Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski and Stanisław Orzechowski, as well as poets like Jan Kochanowski and others, articulated the tasks of the political community on the basis of classical tradition: giving up personal goals or ambitions and subordinating oneself to the will of the majority. This is one of the most important aspects of republicanism.[9] A literary example comes from Jan Kochanowski's drama *The Dismissal of Greek Envoys* (1578) in which a protagonist, Antenor, is a virtuous character fighting against the populist demands of his opponent Aleksander. While Aleksander's proposition wins (owing to its populist character), Antenor may be considered the first republican hero of European

literature because he relinquishes his political ambitions in the name of the common good.[10] Similarly, in Stanisław Orzechowski's treatise *Quincunx* (1563), one finds the definition of a state as a "community of common benefit" (*wspólnota pożytku*).

*Virtus*, or virtue, is the key term of the Polish system. In the language of the Commonwealth, virtue had a political value, just as it did in the thought of antiquity.[11] We know that *virtus* is accomplished in the sphere of day-to-day dialogue (*negotium*) and is related to the community's obligations.

#### **Without the long tradition of Republicanism that had as its centerpiece freedom of the individual, Polish consciousness would have been different.**

"Virtuous discourse" has three aspects. The first has to do with the political life of the State and the process of the participation of noblemen in political affairs—using Hans Baron's expression, this aspect of life is best described as "civic humanism." [12] The second aspect relates to the noblemen's private life. Here a special role is played by the stoic idea of *aurea mediocritas* (golden mean, or golden mediocrity) that marked a model existence in the gentry mansion, far from urban spaces and in accordance with nature and its rhythm, under the shield of "averageness" (*otium*). One can find hundreds of examples of this kind of life in the writings of Polish writers starting in the early sixteenth century and ending with Wacław Potocki at the end of the seventeenth. Rej's *Life of an honest man* (*Żywot człowieka poczciwego*, 1568) is typical of such descriptions of ideal life in a mansion where existence is inscribed into seasons of the year. This is an important aspect of Catholic Sarmatism: consent to remain average and refusal to reach for things that surpass man's natural abilities.

The third aspect of virtuous discourse binds virtue to the battlefield. The military strategy of the Commonwealth was part of the international politics of the Polish state, and it turned out to be extraordinarily stable. For example, it worked splendidly at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, during the years of conflict with the Teutonic Order. It was presented at the Council of Constance (1414–18) in connection with scholastic differentiation between just and unjust wars. It was taken for granted that the nobleman's duty was to protect his fatherland; in this way, the virtue of *amor patriae* was put to practice. In the sixteenth century poet Jan Kochanowski added the aspect of religious salvation: "If a path to heaven is open to anyone, it is primarily to those who serve their

country.” Kochanowski thus alluded to *Somnium Scypionis* in Cicero’s dialogue *De republica*. In the seventeenth century the nobles of the *Res Publica* displayed pride in the fact that their state never conducted an offensive war—which was not quite true, some “offensive” episodes in Polish history did occur. This state of the noblemen’s consciousness generated the legend (some noblemen’s diaries and correspondence confirm this idea) that Poles have pacific inclinations. On the other hand, some historians have declared the Polish military (the *hussaria* cavalry in particular) to be among the top military forces in the seventeenth century.

There is also a fourth dimension in the discussion about virtue among Polish gentry writers. In the sixteenth century an interesting discourse developed (with counterparts in classical Renaissance texts about virtue) that tried to connect the idea of nobility with virtue, and virtue with the state. As Skinner put it: “The theorists of Republican liberty tend to think of virtue as that quality which enables a free people to maintain their freedom and enhance the greatness of their commonwealth. For [these] writers, the concept of virtue thus [denotes] those qualities which guarantee success in political life.”[13] The state is well constructed when it enables its citizens to cherish and maintain their virtues; in the virtue of citizens the real wealth and power of the state reside. Writers like Orzechowski or Modrzewski have opined that owing to its political construction, the Polish *Res Publica* is a state that makes the virtue of its citizens its organizational foundation. This way of reflecting on the state’s organization (those familiar with the classical tradition will recognize the influence of the Roman republican writings) influenced the self-consciousness of the Polish noblemen and helped shape their sense of political and moral obligations to the state. The moral and ethical formula of statecraft is a never-ending task for the citizens, and participation in the political institution of the entire “gentry nation” requires immense diligence in the practice of virtue from everyone. Any slackening of diligence brings severe consequences for the Commonwealth. This kind of moral self-understanding shaped the perspective from which Polish noblemen viewed other European political organizations.

In the political vocabulary of the Commonwealth an important place was occupied by the concept of equality (*equalitas*). It was treated as an obligatory value, because in the Commonwealth law was absolutely sovereign. The political institutions of the

Commonwealth provided noblemen with both passive and active elective rights. In other words, even an average active nobleman could aspire to all state offices, both local and “central.” The principle of equality worked in the royal election procedures, during meetings of the Sejm or sessions of the *sejmiks*. The law of *neminem captivabimus* likewise pertained to every nobleman. It led to an intensification of the sense of security and was therefore useful during the legislative process. Even an average nobleman could go to court against a magnate or even the king. By comparison, noblemen in Muscovy or Germany enjoyed incomparably less liberty, to the point where (in Muscovy) they were sometimes considered mere slaves of the autocrat. This gave the Polish noblemen a sense of uniqueness and quite a bit of satisfaction. They compared their Commonwealth to the Venetian Republic (Polish Renaissance scholars favored the University of Padua as a place for graduate study).[14] However, when we think about the political history of the second half of the seventeenth century, it is easy to notice that the idea of *equalitas* turned into a rhetorical and propagandistic tool in the hands of a new class of magnates.

*Libertas* was another basic idea of the Commonwealth. Its historical formation proceeded as follows. The anonymous eleventh-century historian who wrote a treatise on the history of Poland (usually referred to as Gallus Anonymus because there is some evidence that he was a French Benedictine) stressed the fact of Polish independence. He proclaimed that the Polish Kingdom had never been conquered by external enemies. Polish gentry lived in the shadow of the legend of Slavonic warriors who defeated Aleksander the Great during his war against Slavic tribes. The fact that the Romans with their legions never reached the Vistula River and did not impose their culture upon the adjacent lands was taken not as evidence of the relative backwardness of Poland (an argument used by German invaders up to and including the Second World War), but quite the contrary, as proof that no one ever imposed their will on the Poles. When Poles joined Western civilization in the tenth century (966), they did so in an act of free choice and not as a historical necessity.

Christianity came to the Slavic tribes in two ways: from Constantinople with the Greek alphabet and Eastern Orthodox rites (parts of southern Poland historically known as *Małopolska* were possibly initiated in those times into Orthodox rites), and from Rome that brought Western tradition and the Latin

language. Even in the middle of the sixteenth century some political thinkers (Orzechowski) reflected on the closeness between the Greek tradition and language, and the Slavonic ones. He was partly right. If a traveler from Kraków decided to make a pilgrimage to the capital and center of his Eastern rite denomination (Constantinople), he would travel through lands that used the languages of the Slavonic family until he reached territory of the Greek language. He would somewhat understand the inhabitants of Czechia, Slovakia, and the Balkan Peninsula. Upon crossing the Carpathian Mountains he would descend to Slavonic plains. Now imagine the same traveler heading toward Rome. Upon crossing the western border of Poland he would find himself in the realm of the German language, and if he wanted to reach Rome he would have to climb high mountain passes in the Alps and descend to plains where Italian was spoken.

Thus the dimensions of the Polish political system were considerable. There was freedom of speech and confession in the *Res Publica*. The state was multireligious from the very beginning, and this was the reason why the nobleman's identity did not focus on religious matters. The term *Polonus catholicus* was coined in the second half of the seventeenth century as a part of public relations in the Counter-Reformation. A story about King Sigismund (Zygmunt) August illustrates this. The king was asked by one of the European monarchs to order a certain author of "troublesome" texts to stop public distribution of his views. The king refused to take any action because of the freedom of speech. A famous saying by the same king illustrates this attitude: "I do not rule over the consciences of my subjects." These words were the Polish answer to the declaration of the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 which famously stated that *cuius regio eius religio* (the sovereign can lawfully decide which religion will be obligatory in his country). This contrasted sharply with the *aurea libertas*, or the golden freedom that Polish noblemen enjoyed and of which they were proud.

However, as time went on the invocations of freedom became a cover-up for the noblemen's unwillingness to concede even partial power to the executive, i.e., the king. In the political writings of this era *aurea libertas* appears to have been incessantly threatened by the *absolutum dominium* of the king. This suspicious discourse surrounded every political act of a monarch and became a rhetorical ruse to boycott any reforms in the state, but it cannot be denied that at the same time it stimulated political engagement among the noblemen.

I have recently edited and published a political text originally printed after the death of King Stefan Batory (1587), just before the next free election. This book waited almost half a millennium for republication. Its full title is *Krótkie zebranie rzeczy potrzebnych z strony wolności* (A Short Collection of Items Necessary [to maintain] the Perspective of Liberty).<sup>[15]</sup> The text is a kind of *silva rerum*, or an anthology of speeches, juridical cases, legal documents with commentaries, and quotations from Polish historians, and was originally compiled by an anonymous author. The central subject is liberty, seen as the most important political asset of the Commonwealth. As far as I understand it, the book's goal was to stimulate interest in political affairs by providing information on how important and spectacular freedom in the *Res Publica* has been, how fragile it is, and how important it is to stay vigilant and protect it against all kinds of threats. This collection is typical of political writings in the Commonwealth, and it encourages noblemen to participate in public life. It argues that the success of the *Res Publica* depends on the vigorous political activity of its citizens and their high political consciousness.

Another important element of the noblemen's *Weltanschauung* was serving as the bulwark of Christendom (*antemurale Christianitatis*). It had a practical aspect: Poles espoused the geopolitics of a kingdom that lay on the outskirts of Latin-speaking Europe. Busily protecting what today is called Western Europe from the Eastern threat (the invasions of Turks, Tartars, and the schismatic Muscovy), the Kingdom did not participate in the Crusades and occasionally skipped contributions to the Roman pontiff. The political writings and literature often touched on these issues: with an awareness of the special position of virtue in political life and the centrality of freedom in Polish politics, the idea of the *antemurale* not only shaped the self-perception of the noble class but also influenced a sense of mission that the Commonwealth had to accomplish in the European family of nations.

An interesting example of this kind of reasoning is Mikołaj Hussowski's "Carmen de statura feritate ac venatione bisontis" (1523). The poem was written for Pope Leon X, a lover of hunting (the author later changed his dedication and offered the poem to the Polish queen Bona Sforza). In splendid classical Latin, Hussowski displays his erudition in both Latin and Italian literature while at the same time constructing an image of a strong opposition between north and south in Europe. He presents Poles as the people of the

north who are similar to the people of the south culturally and civilizationally, but at the same time are enriched by a special task: the defense of European heritage against dangers descending upon Europe from the East. So Poles are Europeans but a bit different, with special duties to carry. The bison hunt during which Polish warriors exercised their military skills is a symbol of the Eastern threat. In Hussowski's presentation, the Polish experience is more individualistic, vivid, and closer to historical truth than the southern one. Hussowski keeps repeating: "Maybe you, the People of the South, have read many books about the bison—I have also read them—but in contrast to you, I fought against the bison many times and I know the power of this dangerous beast."

#### CONCLUSION

Poland has sometimes been perceived as a country whose people love freedom and are eager warriors, yet they end up as romantic losers. In this context are viewed the Polish refusal to cooperate in any form with the Nazis in the Second World War (there was no chance that any kind of Vichy-style government would be set up in Poland), massive opposition to the German occupation, Rising '44, opposition to Soviet occupation after the war, and the labor movement *Solidarność*. There is no doubt that without the long tradition of republicanism that had freedom of the individual as its centerpiece, Polish consciousness would have been different and we could not have found the energy to fight "for your freedom and ours."

But there is also a tradition (conspicuously present in our internal political discourse) of perceiving Poles as a proud and quarrelsome people, full of complexes, prejudices, and xenophobia. From my perspective, the process of the colonization of Poland played a major role in shaping this second discourse. As we know, the process of colonization comes not only from the outside, but also from the inside: the creation and then manipulation of various complexes and acceptance of the thesis of Poland's cultural backwardness.

At the end of the eighteenth century *Res Publica* lost its independence; worse, it was divided between three neighboring states of which at least two represented fundamentally different political options: they were absolute monarchies. Poles entered the nineteenth century, or the formative period for contemporary European identity, without their own state or their own political representation. However, they preserved a strong desire for new forms of communal existence outside the confines of a political entity. At the same

time, they began to be subjected to cultural colonization by the states that had partitioned them and now administered them. These facts influenced not only the self-consciousness of Poles, but also the external perception of that nation.

The republican ideas withered, affected by the fall of the *Res Publica*. The idea of the enlightened monarchy and liberalism, nationalistic ideas, and democratic and free market philosophies moved the philosophy of the *Res Publica* to historical storage. Yet in recent years one observes a renaissance of the investigation of European republicanism. The Polish political system of yore needs to be placed close to the center of this investigation. ▲

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#### NOTES

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8. Władysław Konopczyński, *Dzieje Polski* (Komorów: Wydawnictwo Antyk-reprint); Paweł Jasienica, *Polska anarchia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1988); Zbigniew Ogonowski, *Filozofia polityczna w Polsce XVII w. i tradycje demokracji europejskiej*, 2d enlarged ed. (Warsaw: Polish Academy of Science, 1999). A defense of

*liberum veto* can be found in J. J. Rousseau's *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* (1772).

9. Skinner, *Foundations*, 176. For the Polish reflection on this value the formative fragment of Cicero's *De officiis* should be recalled: "Anyone who looks after the interests of only one part of a citizen body while neglecting the rest, introduces into the government of a city the most pernicious element of all, namely sedition and discord." Quoted from Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 24.

10. Jan Kochanowski, *Dismissal of Greek Envoys*, translated by Bill Johnston (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2007).

11. Skinner's *Vision of Politics*, vol. 2 is devoted to the question of virtues in the political reflection of Renaissance writers. The foundational work that describes the connection between political success and virtue is Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* in which we read that "where is the passion for virtues, the attainment of glory will necessarily follow, even if it is not our objective." *Tusculanae Disputationes*, II: XVIII.43.

12. Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966).

13. Skinner, *Foundations*, 177.

14. Gaspare Contarini's *De Magistratus et Republica Venetorum* (1543) and Pier Paolo Vergerio's *De Republica Veneta* (1400) were popular in Poland.

15. Krzysztof Warszawicki and anonymous, *Uwagi o wolności szlacheckiej* (Kraków: Ignatianum, 2010).

## Inne wyzwania. Poezja Bogdana Czaykowskiego i Andrzeja Buszy w perspektywie dwukulturowości

(Other challenges: Bogdan Czaykowski's and Andrzej Busza's poetry in bicultural perspective) **By Janusz Pasterski.** Rzeszów: Rzeszów University Press, 2011. 360 pages. Bibliography, Index of names, English summary. ISBN 978-83-7338-611-2. Paper. In Polish.

### Bożena Karwowska

After initial vivid interest in émigré writing, more than twenty years after the end of communist control of Eastern Europe Polish literary critics and academics seldom explore émigré literature in their quest for new or previously overlooked themes. With only a few exceptions, Polish writers in exile have had limited impact on literary processes in today's Poland. Moreover, the idea of exile has undergone significant changes in recent years. The end of politically motivated emigration from the Soviet bloc coincided with changes in postmodern and modern societies, opening them up to multicultural settings. Cultural

hybridity has become accepted, at least nominally, and immigrants are hopefully seen as valuable members and contributors to the cultures of the countries in which they have settled.

Dispersed around the world, postwar Polish exiles contributed both to their new homelands and to their native Polish culture. Because of the tightly controlled publishing market in Soviet-occupied countries, many émigré writers were virtually unknown in their homelands outside of a small circle of specialists. Many of them deserve critical attention both for their works and their lives. This is the case of Bogdan Czaykowski and Andrzej Busza, the two poets discussed by Janusz Pasterski in his recent book. The choice of publisher seems rather obvious since, in their last years, both poets established close relations with the academic community of the University of Rzeszów and cooperated with the region's literary journal *Fraza* publishing a number of their works in it. They visited Rzeszów several times in recent years, thus affording Dr. Pasterski an opportunity to discuss issues with them.

By bringing Busza and Czaykowski to the attention of Polish readers and the scholarly community, the critic begins to fill the gap between the importance of both writers to the literary life of the so-called London émigré circles and their absence in Polish contemporary critical thought. Pasterski notes two distinct but not entirely separate areas of significance in Czaykowski's and Busza's literary activities. He divides his book accordingly, first discussing the phenomenon of young émigrés who consciously choose Polish literature as the literary context of their writing despite having only a dim memory (or rather postmemory in Busza's case) of their homeland, and despite growing up partly in the Polish Diaspora and partly in an English-speaking environment. Pasterski devotes the remainder of his book to Czaykowski's and Busza's poetry within the context of what he calls "biculturalism." The critic thus intuitively understands that the value of their oeuvres lies not in their literary texts alone, but also in their comparable biographies and similar fates.

In the 1950s Bogdan Czaykowski and Andrzej Busza, together with other young Poles who found themselves in the United Kingdom after the war, initiated a literary group called "Merkuriusz," later reorganized and renamed "Kontynenty." In the early 1960s the two moved to Vancouver, Canada, where they continued their literary careers as faculty members at the University of British Columbia. In terms of the consecutive countries in which they lived, they belong to what Ruben G. Rumbaut has called the "one-and-a-