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On Andrzej Sulima Kamiński's Republican Vision of the History of Poland¹

The history and culture of Poland, as well as that of Central and Eastern Europe, has been regarded in the Western philosophical-scholarly discourse in an extremely stereotypical way at least since the Age of Enlightenment. The lack of presence of the region's nations on the political map of Europe in 'the long 19th century' had cemented the Enlightenment's ontological geography, a picture of an underdeveloped region full of chaos, thus consolidating the dominance of superpowers over the 'small' nations. Among the very centre of those ideas was the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth's 'black legend'; a myth of a backward, anarchic and smug country that was supposed to justify not only its partitions, but also the rule of empires over the whole area between the Elbe and the Don.² With the progressing internationalization of the historical discourse, Polish scholars saw it possible to revise fixed stereotypes in the beginning of the 20th century. The interwar period allowed for yet another stage in the process of twisting the interpretation of the region's history in the Western discourse: eminent scholars of the subject, such as professors of the University of Warsaw, Marcei Handelsman (1882–1945) and Oskar Halecki (1891–1973) joined in organizing the International Congress of Historical Sciences. The latter, having emigrated to the United States after the World War II, found himself in a new conditions, where he continued his struggles on the subject of revising the biases against Poland and bringing the Central and Eastern European nations back onto the mental map of the West.³

A pursuit of a specific deconstruction of the Central and Eastern Europe picture in the Western sciences was continued by the next generation of Polish scholar-emigrants, such as Wiktor Weintraub (1908–1988), Marian Kamil Dziewanowski (1913–2005), Piotr Wandycz (1923–2017)

1 This text is based on a chapter of my doctoral thesis written at the Faculty of History at the University of Warsaw under the guidance of Prof. Katarzyna Błachowska. The research was made possible thanks to the financial support of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, University of Warsaw Integrated Development Programme and Richard Pipes Scholarship, awarded by the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

2 The literature dedicated to the perception of the region through the Enlightenment thinking is extraordinarily vast. A groundbreaking book in this regard was Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

3 More about Oskar Halecki's emigrant works, see R. Stobiecki, *Klio za wielką wodą: polscy historycy w Stanach Zjednoczonych po 1945 roku* [Klio on the Other Side of the Pond: Polish Historians in the United States after 1945], Warszawa 2017, p. 135–169.

and Anna Cienciała (1929–2014). Another successful ‘ambassador’ of the Polish and Central and Eastern European interests in terms of historiography was Andrzej Sulima Kamiński, whose contribution to the American discourse about the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the pursuit of reevaluation of its depiction within the Polish historiographic tradition is the goal of this study. I would like to thank the Professor for his huge support during the last four years of my own research. And so, this text is an attempt to pay the intellectual debt back to the Master.

Andrzej Kamiński was born on 22 October 1935 in Kraków in an intellectual family connected to the eastern regions of pre-war Commonwealth.⁴ His father, Zbigniew Kamiński, was born in Lwów, now Lviv, while his mother Helena’s family, the Czarnieckis, came from Bobruysky Uyezd on the territory of present Belarus. Family connections to these eastern regions greatly influenced the historian’s interests in the Commonwealth’s multinational heritage and formed his identity of a ‘pre-partitions historical Pole’. Years later, the scholar would write about himself: “Polish Samogitian, *Kresowiak* (through Belarusian peasants), with some Tatar blood somewhere along the way, so an almost Asian creature.”⁵

Having graduated from Bartłomiej Nowodworski High School in Kraków in 1953, Kamiński commenced historical studies at Jagiellonian University, where he got his master’s degree, having written a work on Augustus II the Strong under the supervision of Kazimierz Piwarski. His graduation coincided with the Polish thaw and the new possibility for the Polish scholars to get in contact with the Western academic world. In 1959 Kamiński received a Ford Foundation scholarship for a 9 month research contract at Stanford University in California, where he took up research about the stand of the Russian ‘white’ movement against Poland and Eastern Europe. He used his stay in the United States to broaden his intellectual horizons through studying books unavailable in Poland, but also to befriend some American scholars: a leading figure in American studies on Eastern Europe, Wayne Vucinich (1913–2005) and future prominent historian on Russia, Reginald Zelnik (1936–2004).⁶ These acquaintances were probably crucial at the turn of the 1970s, when Kamiński found himself in the U.S. as a political immigrant.

Kamiński’s initial plans to write his doctoral thesis about the Alexander Kolchak-lead Russian

4 Basic biography facts are based on Andrzej Kamiński’s scholar biographies and materials available in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance. *Curriculum Vitae (Andrzej Kamiński)*, Columbia University Archives (CUA), Leopold Haimson Papers, box 4; Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (AIPN), Kr 010/9672, Sprawy operacyjnego rozpracowania kryptonimy „Kamieniecki”/„Stypendysta”/„Aleksander” dot. Andrzej Kamiński [Cases regarding cracking the code names ‘Kamieniecki’/‘Scholarship Holder’/‘Aleksander’, regarding Andrzej Kamiński], vol. 1–3.

5 *Andrzej Kamiński’s letter to Zbigniew Wójcik, undated [1981]*, Collection of Mariusz Kolmasiak (ZMK). The letters were made accessible courtesy Dr. Mariusz Kolmasiak.

6 *Notatka i wnioski w sprawie operacyjnego sprawdzenia krypt. „Aleksander”* [Note and conclusions regarding cracking the code name ‘Aleksander’], 17 September 1962, AIPN, Kr 010/9672, vol. 1, c. 70–72.

Government in Omsk's stance on Central and Eastern Europe in 1918–1919 came to nothing because of the then ideological restrictions. Kamiński started to work as a senior assistant in the Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków and he became interested in the early modern period; he studied the then less-known subject of the Polish–Russian relations during the reign of Peter the Great and the Great Northern War (1700–1721). While working on his doctoral thesis under Kazimierz Piwarski (1903–1968) and Józef Gierowski (1922–2006), Kamiński visited the archives in Moscow multiple times. During the 1960s he visited the Soviet Union at least ten times, where he had tenures at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. He obtained his doctor's degree in November 1966 and remained at the university as an assistant professor. In the meantime, in 1967–1969, he also served as the secretary of the Kraków branch of Polish Historical Society, thus visibly strengthening his position and publishing possibilities.⁷ It was an extremely prolific time in his writing career; in the second half of the 1960s he published a number of articles about the Polish–Russian relations in the beginning of the 18th century.⁸ Another scholarship in Moscow in 1966 resulted in his article in an omnibus edition published in memory of Mikhail Tikhomirov (1893–1965), a prominent Soviet specialist in medieval studies. The position of the Polish historian might be very significantly described by the fact that he was the only author outside of the Soviet Union whose text was included in the book.⁹ In 1969 the National Ossoliński Institute published Kamiński's book *Sandomierz Confederation and Russia after the Treaties of Altranstädt, 1706–1709*,¹⁰ which was based on his doctoral thesis.

The possibility of visiting the Soviet Union along with a relative openness of the Polish academic environment to scholars from the other side of the Iron Curtain resulted in some favourable conditions for apt Polish academics to establish international contacts. During his visits to Moscow in the 1960s, Kamiński met professor Martin Malia (1924–2004), a rising star of the American historiography of Russia at the Berkeley University, who at the time became very close with the Polish academia.¹¹ An acquaintance with a Columbia University professor Leopold Haimson (1927–2010), whom Kamiński met during his work in the archives, had a significant impact on the latter's future career. In Kraków he met a specialist on the Russian Old Believers, Robert Crummey

7 *Curriculum Vitae Andrzeja Kamińskiego* [Andrzej Kamiński's Curriculum Vitae], Jagiellonian Library, Wiktor Weintraub's Archives (AWW), sign. 243/07.

8 A. Kamiński, "Przeciwko Szwedom i Leszczyńskiemu" [Against the Swedes and Leszczyński, *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1966, p. 230–259; A. Kamiński, "Początki anty-szwedzkiego sojuszu: ze stosunków polsko-rosyjskich 1704–1706" [The beginnings of an anti-Swedish alliance: Polish-Russian relations in 1704–1706], *Przegląd Historyczny*, no. 60/2, 1969, p. 291–313.

9 А. Каминский, *Первые годы польско-русского союза 1704–1709 гг.*, in: *Международные отношения в Центральной и Восточной Европе и их историография*, ed. В. Корольюк, Москва 1966, p. 213–223.

10 A. Kamiński, *Konfederacja sandomierska wobec Rosji w okresie poaltransztadzkiem, 1706–1709* [Sandomierz Confederation and Russia after the treaties of Altranstädt, 1706–1709], Wrocław 1969.

11 *Martin Edward Malia. Historian of Russian and European Intellectual History. An interview conducted by David Engerman*, Berkeley 2005, p. 118–120, 132.

(born 1936), as well as a British scholarship holder Norman Davies (born 1939), who, as a result, translated Kamiński's first internationally significant work into English – a chapter concerning Poland at the turn of the 18th century, co-written with Gierowski for *The New Cambridge Modern History*.¹²

An esteemed position of Kamiński in the academia and newly appearing publishing possibilities did not change the fact that the Polish People's Republic remained an authoritarian country that kept the historical sciences under strict control. The Polish political crisis of 1968 deepened Kamiński's already apparent desire to leave the country. It increased greatly after his application for a scholarship at the University of Oxford, granted by the British Council, was rejected. Disheartened by an anti-semitic campaign and obstacles put in his way, the historian decided to defect.

An offer of giving lectures at the Institute on East Central Europe at Columbia University was the direct reason for the decision to leave Poland. Its director, István Deák (born 1926), a historian of Hungarian heritage, offered the Polish scholar a six-month series of lectures starting in January 1970. Kamiński did not want to lose such an extraordinary chance, so he visited Great Britain as a tourist in September 1969, where he obtained a temporary affiliation at St. Antony's College at the University of Oxford. He left for the United States at the beginning of 1970, which started the American period of his career.

At the time, New York's Columbia University, where Kamiński worked in 1970–1982, was one of the most important research centres in the world dealing with the history and contemporary affairs of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. An important circumstance that made the immigrant's integration easier was the backing and support by prominent scholars of Russian–Jewish heritage: Marc Raeff (1923–2008) and Leopold Haimson. Although both of them specialized in Russian history, they thought of the acquisition of an authority on the Commonwealth as an opportunity for a broader perspective on the modern Eastern Europe. Kamiński and Raeff run a lecture series together on the comparative history of Russia and Central and Eastern Europe in the 16th–18th centuries. The Russian gave the Polish historian a free hand in preparing the programme.¹³ Leopold Haimson in turn made sure to get Kamiński's contract prolonged by obtaining the university's permission and financial support of the Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation. During Kamiński's over a decade long tenure at Columbia University, Haimson was constantly trying to get him a permanent position. Because of an extraordinary student interest in the classes taught by the

12 J. Gierowski, A. Kamiński, *The Eclipse of Poland*, in: *The New Cambridge Modern History*, ed. J. Bromley, Cambridge 1970, vol. 6, p. 681–715; N. Davies, *Sam o sobie* [On Himself]; translated by B. Pietrzyk, Kraków 2019, s. 262.

13 *Current Course offerings in Polish and related areas for 1970/1971*, CUA, Leopold Haimson Papers, box 4. *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Marc Raeff, 28 July 1971*, CUA, Marc Raeff Papers, box 15, folder 1.

Polish scholar, courses of the early-modern region's history soon became a core for the whole teaching history programme of Poland, Russia and Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁴ While Haimson described Kamiński's possible leave due to a lack of tenure as a "devastating loss for our programme",¹⁵ Marc Raeff said that the 17th century history of the Tsardom of Muscovy, which was Kamiński's academic interest, was one of the least known periods of the Russian history, because of the omission of the Polish and Ukrainian influences on the modernization of Russia, among other things.¹⁶

The measures of Kamiński's Russian friends did not succeed and since 1979, while still officially associate professor of history at Columbia University, Kamiński started a job as an adviser, by conducting sociological research. In autumn 1982 he received a chance to get a stable job. Thanks again to the support and recommendations by Raeff and Haimson, Kamiński became an assistant professor of history at the Georgetown University in Washington, where he obtained a tenure in 1989 and remained there until his retirement in 2016.

In a new environment Kamiński continued his work that is probably his most important contribution to the studies on the history of Poland, Russia and Central and Eastern Europe – the creation of a separate space for historians of the region in American academia. Even in 1977, his didactic skills and the ability to assemble talented students made Raeff and Haimson declare that Kamiński had already assembled a following that in a short time "would have a profound influence on the development on Russian, Central and Eastern European studies in the United States".¹⁷ During a few dozen years of his American career, Kamiński taught a great deal of prominent specialists in the history of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia; over twenty students got their doctoral degrees under his supervision. These include: Dwight van Horn, Maria Pryshlak, Karin Friedrich, Barbara Pendzich, Felicia Roşu, Catherine McKenna and Curtis Murphy, to name a few. 'Kamiński's Jewish school' was an effect of many years of effort, which created a completely new look on the Polish–Jewish history of the Commonwealth.¹⁸ Students from New York's Jewish Theological Seminary of America were attending his seminars and lectures on the history of the Commonwealth in the 1970s. Some of them, like Moshe Rosman and Gershon Hundert, were to become prominent specialists on the Polish–Jewish history. Kamiński's didactic success as a teacher of new generations of historians specializing in Central and Eastern Europe was caused by his

14 *Leopold Haimson's letter to Malcolm Bean, 5 January 1976*, CUA, Leopold Haimson Papers, box 4.

15 *Ibid.*

16 M. Raeff, *Understanding Imperial Russia. State and Society in the Old Regime*, New York 1984, p. 1, 19–21.

17 *Leopold Haimson's letter to George Fraenkel, 11 March 1977*, CUA, Leopold Haimson Papers, box 4.

18 *Professor Andrzej Sulima Kamiński: A Citizen of the Commonwealth*. A eulogy delivered by Prof. Andrzej Nowak during the ceremony when Andrzej Kamiński received the Jerzy Giedroyc Award in December 2017 (author's collection) p. 5.

diligence in allowing his students the space to conduct their own research. In the United States, he supported their efforts to get scholarships to go to Poland.¹⁹ In Poland, he provided them with comprehensive protection, which was possible because of the help of his close friends, including such prominent Polish historians as Józef Gierowski, Aleksander Gieysztor and Zbigniew Wójcik.²⁰

A considerable reason for Kamiński's didactic success on American soil was his search for a new model of depiction of the history of Poland and his attempts to place it within a broader European perspective. He considered republican ideals of liberty and civic society of the Commonwealth as the most important contributions of Poland to human history; he comprehended them within the European republican tradition, built upon the foundation of an ancient philosophy. He compared the political system of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth to those of other republics, for example Florence, Novgorod and the United States; he compared Polish thinkers, such as Andrzej Fredro and Łukasz Opaliński, to the classics of Western republican thought, Niccolò Machiavelli and James Harrington.²¹ Andrzej Kamiński aimed with his ideas at the American audience above all, and while teaching classes he complied with a phrase by Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004): “A professor cannot talk to foreigners, not until they become unused to the Polish audience. Familiar myths, rooted in the language and with emotional resonance, are dead to the foreign audience.”²²

A path towards a new look onto the history of the Commonwealth as a multinational republic was formed as a result of Kamiński's cooperation with prominent Ukrainian historiographers from the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University, namely Omeljan Pritsak (1919–2006) and Ihor Ševčenko (1922–2009). Starting with his first speech at a Harvard Ukrainian seminary in February 1971, the Polish scholar talked about all of his most important research projects throughout the 1970s.²³ The Ukrainians were particularly interested in Kamiński's research on the 1658 Treaty of Hadiach, that accorded with the critical revision of the Ukrainian history by the Harvard academia. Kamiński wrote an article about Hadiach as a result of this cooperation, which was published in 1977 in one of the first issues of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*; Kamiński considered it his personal best.²⁴ As Kamiński, Pritsak and Ševčenko all aimed at changing the American academia's

19 *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Marc Raeff, [presumably October-November 1973]*, CUA, Marc Raeff Papers, box 15, folder 1.

20 *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Marc Raeff, 21 June 1974*, CUA, Marc Raeff Papers, box 15, folder 1.

21 *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Aleksander Gieysztor, lack of data*, Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences (APAN), Aleksander Gieysztor's materials, sign. 1125, c. 58.

22 Cz. Miłosz, “O historii polskiej literatury, wolnomyślicielach i masonach” [On the History of Polish Literature, Freethinkers and Masons], *Kultura*, no. 4, 271, 1970, p. 5.

23 *Minutes of the Seminar in Ukrainian Studies held at Harvard University*, Cambridge 1972, 1973, 1976.

24 A. Kamiński, “The Cossack Experiment in Szlachta Democracy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: The Hadiach (Hadziacz) Union”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1977, p. 178–197; *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Omeljan Pritsak, 6 August 1974*, Harvard University Archives (HUA), Records of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, sign. 858.5, box 2.

perception of Poland and Ukraine, they cooperated together on organizing panels at prestigious historical conferences, such as the annual congresses of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) and the American Historical Association (AHA). Kamiński was responsible for approaching Polish historians Zbigniew Wójcik (1922–2014), Józef Gierowski and Zygmunt Abrahamowicz (1923–1990) to increase the number of Polish scholars within the American discussion.²⁵ Because of his involvement in the Harvard Ukrainian life, Andrzej Kamiński took part in all of the most important Polish–Ukrainian meetings in the 1970s and 1980s, which aimed at critical rethinking of mutual stereotypes. In October 1977, during a landmark conference at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, he presented a paper where he appealed to give up the nationalistic perspective of the 19th century historiography and instead look upon the Cossack history within the context of the Cossacks’ mutual struggle along szlachta, or nobility, against centralism, inspired by the republican idea of liberty (*szlachta’s libertas* against the royal *maiestas*).²⁶ Research conducted by Kamiński on the diplomatic relations of the Commonwealth and Muscovy at the turn of the 18th centuries took the history of Ukraine, which was placed somewhat in the middle of the Polish–Russian confrontation, into account in an exceptional way. Looking upon the modern history of Eastern Europe through the triad of the Commonwealth–Ukraine–Muscovy was only beginning to enter the scholarly debate, thus commencing a new stage of American academia’s different perception of history of the entire region of Eastern Europe.

Omeljan Pritsak saw Kamiński’s trailblazing role in popularizing such an approach and offered to publish the latter’s work on the Polish–Muscovite relations within the *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* series.²⁷ The book was ultimately published in 1993 under the title *Republic vs. Autocracy: Poland-Lithuania and Russia, 1686–1697*; it received the Oskar Halecki Prize, given by the Polish American Historical Association.²⁸ Kamiński not only presented a new interpretation of many important issues regarding Polish–Muscovite/Russian relations, such as the role of Ukrainian intellectualists educated within the Polish culture in the ‘Europeanization’ of Moscow, the case of

25 Prof. Kamiński’s presence in the AAASS Programme Committee made it possible to organize a panel in 1973 about Bohdan Khmelnytsky, with the participation of Bernard Weinryb, George Grabowicz, Jarosław Peleński and Zygmunt Abrahamowicz. *Program of the Sixth National Convention of the AAASS, 18–21 March 1973*, New York 1973, p. 5; *Omeljan Pritsak’s letter to Andrzej Kamiński, 21 December 1972*, HUA, Records of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, sign. 858.15, box 1.

26 A. S. Kaminsky, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its Citizens (Was the Commonwealth a Stepmother for Cossacks and Ruthenians)*, in: *Poland and Ukraine. Past and Present*, ed. P. Potichnyj, Edmonton–Toronto 1980, p. 32–57.

27 *Omeljan Pritsak’s letter to Andrzej Kamiński, 18 August 1988*, Omeljan Pritsak’s Kyiv Archives (AOP), sign. 659, c. 59.

28 A. Kaminski, *Republic vs. Autocracy: Poland-Lithuania and Russia, 1686–1697*, Cambridge 1993; “Annual Report of the Executive Director (June 1995–June 1996) Thaddeus V. Gromada”, *The Polish Review*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1996, p. 497. Translated into Belarusian: *A. C. Камінскі, Рэч Пасналітая і Расія ў 1686—1697 гадах*, Мінск 2009.

monk Solomon (1689–1690) or the role of Peter the Great in the election of Augustus II, but also showed that the loss of Ukraine by the Commonwealth resulting from the Truce of Andrusovo (1667) and the Treaty of Perpetual Peace (1686) had a decisive role for the whole of Eastern Europe. He advanced an innovative thesis that John III Sobieski and the then political elites of the Commonwealth lost the rivalry over the Cossack Hetmanate against autocratic Muscovy because they lacked a well-considered ‘Ukrainian’ program. This defeat permanently shifted the political centre of gravity of Eastern Europe from Warsaw to Moscow, which had very serious and far-reaching consequences for all of Europe. In the chapter called *The Ukrainian Paradox*, Kamiński showed that the paradox lay in the fact that the Cossack country, grown from republican ideas of liberty and democracy, opted for ‘Muscovite tyranny’ and at the same time rejected the Commonwealth’s ‘sweet liberty.’²⁹

Although Kamiński approvingly emphasised the Commonwealth’s civic message and tolerance, he was very critical about the perception of the ‘Ukrainian matter’ within the Polish national mythology and the political practice of the period between the World Wars. He took advantage of the lectures at Jozef Pilsudski Institute of America and the meetings with the latest ‘Solidarity’ emigration from Poland in that he put the place of Ukraine in the Polish mass culture and political thought under critical revision. He wrote about these issues under a telling title “Within the Moral and Political Blindness: Ukraine and Ukrainians as Seen by the Poles”, which was published in 1985 in the Ukrainian magazine *Suchasnist*, in the special Polish-themed issue.³⁰ This text was a result of many-year-long reflections on the canon of the Polish political-historical thought and an attempt to leave the “limitations of the damned circle of ignorance, clichés and prejudices of the dominant treating of *minorities* by the Polish culture and society of the 19th and 20th centuries.”³¹ Kamiński’s pursuit of revising the dominant interpretation of the Polish history and the desire to examine the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as a multinational republic, which characterised all of his literary output to date, fell to ruin at the very basis of the vision presented in the article.

The *Suchasnist* publication, as well as Kamiński’s innovative approach, was noted by Jerzy Giedroyc (1906–2000), the editor in chief of the Parisian magazine *Kultura*, who, for many years,

29 A. Kaminski, *Republic vs. Autocracy...*, p. 200.

30 A. S. Kamiński, *W kręgu moralnej i politycznej ślepoty: Ukraina i Ukraińcy w oczach Polaków* [Within the Circle of Moral and Political Blindness: Ukraine and Ukrainians as Seen by the Poles], „Сучасність”, issue in Polish, no. 1–2, summer 1985, p. 7–19. The article was later reprinted in the underground opposition press, in the magazines: *Poglądy, Opinie Krakowskie, Polacy i Ukraińcy. Trudny Dialog*. It had wide repercussions within the Polish opposition circles and, after many years, was included in an important anthology: *Nie jesteśmy ukrainofilami: polska myśl polityczna wobec Ukraińców i Ukrainy: antologia tekstów* [We are not Ukrainophiles: Polish Political Thought Regarding Ukrainians and Ukraine: An Anthology], ed. P. Kowal, J. Ołdakowski, M. Zuchniak, Wrocław 2002, p. 355–368.

31 *Andrzej Kamiński’s letter to Omeljan Pritsak, 23 January 1986*, AOP, sign. 855, c. 23.

was looking for an author that would devise Poland's history within a new depiction. When he learned about Kamiński's lectures at Columbia University, he entrusted him with a mission to write a new synthesis.³² Giedroyc was convinced by the concurrence of their ideas in the critical perception of the legacy of the National Democracy. It was significant, as the idea behind Giedroyc's new *Historia Polski* (History of Poland) was to be an answer for the rising nationalistic tendencies in Poland and present a new depiction of Polish history, free of communist and national influences.³³ Although the idea of publishing the synthesis by the Instytut Literacki (Literary Institute) didn't work out in the end, Kamiński worked intensively on the manuscript throughout 1986–1987. In August 1987 he informed about having finished the 500 page long typescript on the 1386–1795 period; in a letter to Zbigniew Wójcik he pointed out that “it would be a republican history.”³⁴ He wanted to fulfil “[t]he irresponsible blind admiration of letting people keep the right to themselves”, which is how he described his republican convictions, “with the *silva rerum* colour ... and the word of the day, poem and atmosphere”. He asked his colleague to send him “at least several well-chosen *Teki Naruszewicza* (Naruszewicz's Briefcases), several volumes from the Radziwiłł and Potocki's Archives, as well as some copies of “[Krzysztof] Grzymałowski's things”³⁵ from Poland.

The exegesis of the history of Poland as proposed by Kamiński differed from the apologetic interpretations of the history of the Polish–Lithuanian state from the depictions of both the supporters of the so-called Jagiellonian idea, headed by Oskar Halecki, and the advocates of ‘the country without stakes’, including for example Janusz Tazbir (1927–2016). This exegesis also differed from the ‘monarchic’ interpretation of Zbigniew Wójcik, who underlined the merits of charismatic monarchs, like John III Sobieski. By comparing the Commonwealth to some ancient and medieval European republics, Kamiński based his idea on the concept of the civic society as the most important adhesive of the political community of the nobles. He presented this idea for the first time in a concise form in 1983.³⁶

Kamiński's forming civic vision was illustrated by his ironic remark in 1979 regarding the

32 Jerzy Giedroyc's letter to Andrzej Kamiński, 2 July 1984, in: „Mam na Pana nowy zamach...”. *Wybór korespondencji Jerzego Giedroycia z historykami i świadkami historii, 1946–2000* [‘I Have a New Plot Against You...’ A Selection of Jerzy Giedroyc's Correspondence with Historians and Witnesses of History], Łódź–Paris 2019, vol. 3, p. 250.

33 Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 21 August 1985, Jerzy Giedroyc's letter to Andrzej Kamiński, 8 August 1986, [in:] *Ibid.*, p. 251–253.

34 Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Zbigniew Wójcik, 16 August 1987, ZMK.

35 *Ibid.*

36 A. Kamiński, *The Szlachta of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and their Government*, in: *The Nobility in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. I. Banac, P. Bushkovitch, New Haven 1983, p. 17–45. Kamiński consulted the text a few times with Zbigniew Wójcik and hoped for “some joy and screaming during a normal discussion”. Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Zbigniew Wójcik, 21 July 1983, ZMK.

reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, which the scholar directed to his friend in Poland, one of the leaders of the Civic Committee and future director of the Castle, Aleksander Gieysztor (1916–1999): “The reconstruction (or rather construction) of the monument of the Polish republicanism at the same time (only a Lithuanian can do it) enlarges the ranks of scholars by a monarchist legend.”³⁷ This biting remark of the emigrant historian was provoked by some boasts about the “not very good May act” as part of the exhibition, which is something he wrote directly to his friend.³⁸ By increasing the prerogatives of the king at the citizens’ expense, the Constitution of 3 May 1791 was a litmus test for Kamiński, used in creating a republican vision of the Polish history. Starting with a lecture on 3 May 1991 in New York at the bicentennial anniversary of the Constitution,³⁹ Kamiński has consistently challenged the idealistic interpretation of this fact’s meaning, which had dominated Polish historiography.⁴⁰ Thus he continued the tradition of a critical look upon the Constitution, which stretched back to the republican-democratic thought of Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861), displayed in particular in his later works.⁴¹

Kamiński’s idea that the contemporary Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians are the rightful successors of the multinational Commonwealth coincided with the ‘neo-Jagiellonian’ initiative of Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) to gather intellectuals from these four nations in Rome. The beginning of this project can be traced back to the millennial anniversary of the Christianization of Kievan Rus’ in 1988, when the Pope entered into communication with Ukrainian scholars from the Harvard University. Other emigration centres followed soon after: Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science based in Rome, Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences from New York and Viacheslav Lypynsky East European Research Institute from Philadelphia.⁴²

The meeting organized by the initiative of John Paul II took place in spring 1990 and gave rise to the Club of Rome. The decision to continue the ‘Roman meeting’ on the territories of the four countries involved was made during the farewell supper, that was accompanied by an “euphoria of liberating from the Soviet rule”. “We wanted to show that the third Rome would happen after all”,

37 *Andrzej Kamiński’s postcard to Aleksander Gieysztor, not dated [end of the 1970s]*, APAN, Aleksander Gieysztor’s Materials, sign. 1125, c. 81.

38 *Ibid.*

39 “Of Note”, *The Polish Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1991, p. 237.

40 He put it in the most concise way in a lecture in the Constitutional Tribunal in 2006, see A. Kamiński, „*Nic o nas bez nas*” a *Konstytucja 3 Maja. Społeczeństwo a Rząd* [‘Nothing About Us without Us’ and the Constitution of 3 May 1791. Society and Government], in: *Pamięć chwili, która nas samym sobie wróciła...* [A Remembrance of a Moment that Has Returned Us to Ourselves], Warszawa 2016, p. 67–75.

41 A. Wierzbicki, *Konstytucja 3 Maja w historiografii polskiej* [The Constitution of 3 May 1791 in the Polish Historiography], Warszawa 1993, p. 8–20.

42 See J. Kłoczowski, *Europa Środkowowschodnia w historiografii krajów regionu* [Central and Eastern Europe in the Historiography of the Countries of the Region], Lublin 1993.

as Kamiński recalled years later; it was also joked that “all roads lead to Rome.”⁴³ A committee on the research of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine was constituted, one that consisted of: chairman Jerzy Kłoczowski, vice-chairman Andrzej Kamiński, secretary Piotr Gach, secretary Stefan Wylężek and members: Jarosław Isajewycz (Lviv), Anatol Hryckiewicz (Minsk), Witaut Kipel (New York), Adam Maldzis (Minsk), Vytautas Merkys (Vilnius), Czesław Miłosz (Berkeley), Jarosław Pełenski (Iowa), Omeljan Pritsak (Cambridge), Paulius Rabikauskas (Rome) and Juozas Tumelis (Vilnius).⁴⁴ Many years later Kamiński reminisced that the basis of this initiative was an “atmosphere of an intellectual dialogue and rapprochement that appeared within the emigrant milieu of historians in the United States.”⁴⁵

The next session of the Club of Rome, titled *Between East and West. History of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine in their mutual relations*, took place in Lublin in June 1991. Its aim was to analyse the interpretation of mutual history in the works of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian scholars. The organizers saw the meeting not only as an opportunity to “criticise the existing state of things”, but also as a chance to “find depictions and expressions that would be faithful to reality and at the same time help with understanding the history of one nation and the mutual coexistence of our societies throughout the centuries with goodwill.”⁴⁶ During the conference in Lublin, Kamiński made a proposal for the committee to change its name to the Committee of Central and Eastern Europe. This proposal was related to his idea for the committee of historians to commence to draft a new synthesis of the history of the nations of this region. Kamiński believed that a new name for the committee, one that would include all of Central and Eastern Europe, would increase the drawing power of the project for potential American donors. According to Kamiński, the new approach was to take into consideration the issues of mutual cultural and political heritage of the four nations and also the matter of civic rights within their territories. The proposal was accepted, although in the end it was decided to limit the committee make-up to Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians. Besides the rapprochement of the “equal successors of the Commonwealth’s heritage”, it was postulated that a research on the place of Jews in the region was to be taken under special attention. It was decided to put the main emphasis on bilateral meetings and take into account and present the emigrant scholars’ findings during every conference. The ‘Europe of regions’ trend, growing more and more popular among Western academia, was being taken into consideration, which was supposed to form a broader

43 Jerzy Kłoczowski’s letter to Omeljan Pritsak, 24 January 1991, AOP, sign. 952, c. 52, Andrzej Kamiński’s letter to Jarosław Hrycak, 23 October 2018 (the letter was courteously made accessible to the author by Prof. Andrzej Kamiński); В. Кіпель, *Жыць і дзеіць. Успаміны*, Мінск 2015, p. 401.

44 Press information, AOP, sign. 952, c. 53.

45 Andrzej Kamiński’s letter to Jarosław Hrycak, 23 October 2018.

46 *Międzynarodowa sesja naukowa z serii „Między Wschodem i Zachodem”* [International Scholarly Session from the ‘Between East and West’ Series], 17–20 June 1991, AOP, sign. 952, c. 57.

regional key within the discussions.⁴⁷ Kamiński's idea for the committee constituted in Lublin to engage in the elaboration of a new history of the region, with the support of some American foundations, was not brought up by chance. The historian himself took part in the debate on teaching the history of Russia and the Soviet Union at the American universities, conducted in the 1980s by educators from the initiative of Social Science Education Consortium.⁴⁸

Historians who gathered in June 1991 considered different cooperation methods: from rewriting the schoolbooks to formulating synthetical depictions addressed to a broader audience. It was during this conference that Kamiński declared an attempt to try to get funds to publish a voluminous work including research of scholars representing the nations of the Commonwealth. That is why he applied to National Endowment for Democracy, an organization supporting democratic transformations all over the world, founded by Ronald Reagan; he got an approval from its employees: Roger Potocki and Nadia Diuk. Thanks to the support of Zbigniew Brzeziński, among others, the idea received twice the grants of fifty thousand dollars each. Andrzej Kamiński reminisced after many years: "In the submitted application I announced *our* readiness to write history that would reject the Soviet aberrations, but also a history free of nationalistic infatuation. The authors were to meet to discuss proposed chapters together."⁴⁹

The confrontation with reality of extremely different or even mutually exclusive interpretations adopted in national historiographies damped the romantic ardour that was still dominating in Rome.⁵⁰ In spite of some observers' sceptical attitudes (like Giedroyc's⁵¹) and deep differences between some participants, the discussion, which lasted almost the whole decade of the 1990s, bore fruit in the form of many shared positions and a number of publications, that were published by the Institute for Central and Eastern Europe in Lublin. When Jerzy Kłoczowski announced Kamiński's synthesis that the latter worked on for over a few decades, the former stated, "I think it would cause a storm and a great debate. I eagerly look forward to it. It would be a very, very deep rehabilitation

47 *Ibid.*

48 A. Kaminski, *Pre-Petrine Russia*, in: *Studying Russian and Soviet History*, ed. A. Ascher, Boulder 1987, p. 18–27.

49 *Andrzej Kamiński's letter to Jarosław Hrycak, 23 October 2018.*

50 Kamiński recalled: "There, [in Rome in 1990] somewhat more than in the later Roman sessions, we were united by the idea that we would make it to see ourselves and our own differently perceived history in a more just way." *Ibid.* A similar opinion was made by Natalia Jakowenko: "As one of the authors of this series and a participant of the working discussions, I can admit that coming up with similar stances was not easy." Н. Яковенко, *Від редактора*, in: А. С. Камінський, *Історія Речі Посполитої як історія багатьох народів, 1505–1795. Громадяни, їхня держава, суспільство, культура*, Київ 2011, p. 8.

51 A. Brzezińska, *Miejsce Ukrainy w Pierwszej Rzeczypospolitej na łamach „Rocznika Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej”* [Ukraine's place within the First Republic in the 'Institute for the Central and Eastern Europe Yearbook', in: *Wspólne dziedzictwo. Rzeczypospolita Obojga Narodów w polskiej i ukraińskiej myśli historycznej XIX i XX w.* [A Common Heritage. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth within the Polish and Ukrainian Historical Thoughts of the 19th and 20th Centuries], ed. W. Telwak, L. Łazurko, P. Sierżęga, Cherson 2019, p. 368.

of the Commonwealth's political system as a civic society.”⁵² A dissertation under the title *The History of the Commonwealth of Many Nations*⁵³ was published in 2000 and was the basis for Andrzej Kamiński's promotion to the position of full professor at Georgetown University.⁵⁴

As opposed to his previous work, Andrzej Kamiński introduced a concept of 'civic space' in his new depiction of the history of the Commonwealth. By that term he meant a specific configuration of civic society and political culture that united the nations of the Commonwealth, different in ethnicity and religion, into one political community. Natalia Jakowenko (born 1942) rightly noticed in the foreword to the Ukrainian translation, that the originality of Kamiński's depiction was based on an important change of research perspective. Until Kamiński's work, the main character in the Polish historiographic interpretation has either been the nation or the state. Kamiński put emphasis on the leading role of 'civic space', that would, beside multi-ethnic nobility, also include urban communities.⁵⁵ Although *The History of the Commonwealth of Many Nations* was officially a part of the 'Polish' part of the series, published by the Institute for Central and Eastern Europe in Lublin, it wasn't in fact dedicated exclusively to Poland. Kamiński presented a history of development, of a society, institutions and nations living in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth; he postulated a departure from squeezing in “the houses of Czartoryski and Radziwiłł, Wiśniowiecki and Kościuszko, Mickiewicz and Sanguszko on the national-ethnic Procrustean bed of the history of Poland”.⁵⁶ At the same time he defended the position of 'regional' republicanism in its confrontation with the monarchic (the king) and oligarchic (the Senate) element, finding a harmonious conjunction of them all in the postulates of Aristotelian *format mixta*.⁵⁷

This is how Kamiński explained his fascination of citizenship: 'After the experiences of youth, which I spent under the Nazi occupation, I lived to the coming of the *glorious* Soviet progress; I came to a conclusion that being a citizen is a very basic thing.'⁵⁸ Without dismissing significant personal reasons, a broader intellectual basis would need to be indicated as well; it enabled Kamiński to look at the Commonwealth's history from a civic perspective. The 1960s and 1970s passed under the rehabilitation of the republican political philosophy in the Western debate about

52 *O Unii Lubelskiej i Unii Europejskiej. Rozmowa z profesorem Jerzym Kłoczowskim (1998)* [On the Union in Lublin and European Union. A Conversation with Professor Jerzy Kłoczowski (1998)], in: *Europa – Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodów...* [Europe – Republic of Many Nations...], p. 82.

53 A. Kamiński, *Historia Rzeczypospolitej Wielu Narodów, 1505–1795: obywatele, ich państwa, społeczeństwo, kultura* [History of the Republic of Many Nations, 1505-1795: Citizens, Their Countries, Society, Culture], Lublin 2000

54 *Prof. James Collins's letter to the author, 23 September 2020* (author's collection).

55 Н. Яковенко, *Бід педагога...*, p. 9.

56 A. Kamiński, *Historia Rzeczypospolitej Wielu Narodów...* [History of the Republic of Many Nations...], p. 14.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

58 *O tradycjach obywatelskich Rzeczypospolitej. Rozmowa z Profesorem Andrzejem Sulimą-Kamińskim* [On the Commonwealth's Civic Traditions. A Conversation with Professor Andrzej Sulima-Kamiński], [in:] A. Nowak, *O historii nie dla idiotów* [A History not for Dummies], Kraków 2019, p. 75.

modern Europe. Representatives of the so-called Cambridge school of the history of political thought, most significantly Quentin Skinner (born 1940), John Pocock (born 1924) and John Dunn (born 1940), brought back somewhat forgotten tradition of ‘neo-Roman’ republicanism, analysed its reception within modern Europe and its influence on the shape of the European model of liberal democracy.⁵⁹ Their books, written in a new methodological style and oriented towards the linguistic interpretation of a ‘political language’, formed a whole historiographic trend, thus forming the basis of a new look at the noble’s democracy within the Commonwealth. Within Kamiński’s work though, one cannot find direct references to the Cambridge school scholars; neither within the work on Polish–Russian relations, nor within the synthesis of the history of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Inscribing noble’s democracy within the overall European context of the renaissance of the republican political thought, inspired by the conciliarism movement (which emphasize the superiority of Vatican Councils over popes) and the works of Italian scholastics (Marsilius of Padua, Bartolus de Saxoferrato),⁶⁰ enables to place Kamiński within the circle of the revivers of the ‘liberty before liberalism’ idea.⁶¹ At the same time, one cannot disregard the fact of Kamiński’s long-term presence within the American academia, where the civic message of the Founding Fathers of the United States never lost its meaning. When searching for elements of the past that would be attractive for the American scholarly audience, Kamiński in some measure reached to the ‘arsenal’ of the Polish republicanism.

Whereas the milieu of the Parisian *Kultura* demanded to abandon the imperial elements of the Polish political thought, Kamiński stigmatized Polish-centric perception of the history of the Commonwealth and Polish ‘historiographic imperialism’. Within his scholarly and journalistic works, he followed a maxim formed by Juliusz Mieroszewski (1906–1976), to renounce “our traditional-historical imperialism in all its forms and manifestations.”⁶² That was supposed to be the aim of the republican vision of the Commonwealth’s history proposed by Kamiński, in which not only did he accent things he considered worthy of extracting from the Polish historical tradition, but he also emphasised the value of civic patriotism. This vision harmonised with the reflections of Jan Józef Lipski (1926–1991), presented in his essays published in Poland, as well as a formula of ‘Old Polish’ patriotism and political tradition, proposed by Andrzej Walicki (1930–2020).⁶³

59 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Cambridge 1978, vol. 1–2; J. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton 1975.

60 A. Kamiński, *Historia Rzeczypospolitej Wielu Narodów...* [History of the Republic of Many Nations...], p. 26.

61 See Q. Skinner, *Wolność przed liberalizmem*, Toruń 2013 [orig. *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1998]. I would like to add that one of the first books that Prof. Kamiński encouraged me to read was, as a matter of fact, Quentin Skinner’s work.

62 J. Mieroszewski, *Rosyjski „kompleks Polski” i obszar ULB* [The Russian ‘Poland Complex’ and the ULB Region], *Kultura*, no. 9, 324, 1974, p. 6.

63 J. J. Lipski, *Dwie ojczyzny – dwa patriotyzmy (uwagi o megalomanii narodowej i ksenofobii Polaków)* [Two

Andrzej Kamiński belongs to a group of Central and Eastern European scholars who, being immigrants, aimed at rehabilitating the Commonwealth's image within the Western historical debate. He abandoned the pompous 'missionism' of Oskar Halecki, to use the words of Andrzej Walicki,⁶⁴ but similar as the author of *The History of the Commonwealth of Many Nations*, he engaged in polemics with the stereotypes adopted in the West, that concerned the political system and also the legal situation of the peasantry in the Commonwealth.⁶⁵ Aiming at undermining schematic thinking about Poland's history and region, Kamiński initiated a project in 2006 called *Przywracanie Zapomnianej Historii. Wyobrażenia o Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w anglojęzycznych podręcznikach akademickich* (Recovering Forgotten History. The Image of East-Central Europe in English Language Academic Textbooks), within which, under the vigilant eye of Eulalia Łazarska, annual meetings take place, of authors and the representatives of American university presses, such as Harvard University Press, University of Pittsburgh Press, Oxford University Press and Indiana University Press with scholars from Poland and other countries of the region. American publishers submit texts for academic textbooks and scholarly monographs to be published every year that are meticulously analysed by the experts during discussions with authors and publishers and then complemented accordingly to the experts' opinions and suggestions of changes. By engaging scholars into the discussion, not only Polish ones, but from other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Kamiński consistently holds onto the principle of the cooperation of historians from the region in the name of solid deconstruction of schematic thinking about the history of this region of Europe fixed within the Western academic discourse. And he does it following a beautiful and universal republican rule: "nothing about us without us."

Translated by Marta Zielińska

Homelands – Two Patriotisms: Remarks about the Polish National Megalomania and Xenophobia], Warszawa 1981; A. Walicki, *Trzy patriotyzmy: trzy tradycje polskiego patriotyzmu i ich znaczenie współczesne* [Three Patriotisms: Three Traditions of Polish Patriotism and Their Contemporary Meaning], Warszawa 1991, p. 15–20.

64 "Między polskim mesjanizmem a misjonizmem. Rozmowa z Andrzejem Walickim" [Between Polish Messianism and Missionism. A Conversation with Andrzej Walicki], *Teologia Polityczna*, no. 4, 2006–2007, p. 30–41.

65 A. Kamiński, "Neo-Serfdom in Poland-Lithuania", *Slavic Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1975, p. 253–268.