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Prisons, politics and the gift of freedom: Kosciuszko, Niemcewicz and Paul I

I

The history of Polish-Russian relations for the past five hundred years since the rise of Muscovy and the golden years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th century to the tragic and controversial plane crash of Polish dignitaries in Smolensk in 2010 has been largely filled with strife and the struggle for dominance in Eastern Europe, animosity and contention, battles, armed intervention and military occupation. The crushing of the Kosciuszko Uprising in 1794 by the overwhelming Russian forces under the military genius of Alexander Suvorov (1729–1800) was both a historical low point for the Polish nation which then ceased to exist as a nation-state and the birth of modern national consciousness and pride inspired by the person of Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746–1817). Under his aegis the Poles continued in their struggle for national independence against Russian domination throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century.

Russia's policy of unrelenting rapacity towards Poland* under Catherine II (ruled 1762–1796) continued throughout the reign of Stanislaw Poniatowski (ruled 1764–1795), the Empress's choice for the Polish throne,

* Redakcja „Bibliotekarza Podlaskiego” zdecydowała się pozostawić termin „Polska” (Poland), którego konsekwentnie używa Autor na oznaczenie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Chodzi oczywiście o byt państwowy, który wspólnie tworzyły wówczas (do 1795 roku) Korona Królestwa Polskiego oraz Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie – przyp. Red.

culminating in the final partition in 1795. Poland was largely unable to put a halt to Russian interference until the final years of Stanislaw's rule, a period marked by the Great Sejm and the May 3 Constitution, the armed resistance in the Polish-Russian War of 1792 and the Kosciuszko Uprising. Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861), lifelong friend and biographer of Niemcewicz, noted the characteristic anti-Russian sentiment of Poles of his generation, directed in particular at the Polish nemesis, Catherine. Provoked by the Czartoryski family's support and sympathy for the May 3 reform movement and the Kosciuszko uprising, Catherine confiscated the family's estates, demanding the sons of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski be sent to the Petersburg court as hostages to ensure compliance with her will. Catherine was deemed by patriotic Poles as "the immediate author of the ruin of Poland whose very name inspired us with horror, and who was cursed by anyone with the heart of a Pole". (Czartoryski 64) The forced service of the two sons, Adam Jerzy and Konstantyn, at the Imperial Court went against all their sentiments, convictions and intentions, having imbibed the sentiment of their mother, Izabela, "having sworn eternal hatred for Russia á la Hamilcar and Hannibal". (60)

In view of the history of Polish-Russian relations, the generous and sympathetic attitude towards Poland and Poles manifested by Paul I upon his assumption of the throne in November of 1796 is remarkable in its own right and represents an astonishing turnabout from the anti-Polish policy of his mother. As opposed to the imperialistic agendas of Peter I and Catherine II in expanding the Russian boundaries through a seemingly endless series of confrontations with Ottoman, Swedish and Polish armies, Paul sought to embrace peace. Beginning with his majority in the early 1770s Paul expressed criticism of Catherine's foreign policy as exhausting the resources of the nation and imposing on the Russian people a terrible burden that was responsible for popular uprisings including the most devastating of all, the Pugachev Uprising of 1773–1775. After his decades-long wait to rule, Paul instituted a policy of peace as soon as he ascended the throne in November, 1796. According to one account, "Царствование Павла Петровича началось с манифеста, провозглашившего мирную политику России". In the manifesto it was stated that since the beginning of the Seven Years War (1756–1763) the Russian Empire had been in a constant state of war and that it was high time for the exhausted Russian people to regain their strength and wellbeing. Paul abolished the most burdensome forms of recruitment imposed by Catherine. He authorized reductions in

the cost of bread and made available to the populace more abundant grain supplies in government storehouses. On a more personal level, among his first acts as tsar, he liberated individuals punished by Catherine, releasing from prison Nikolai Novikov (1744–1818) and Kosciuszko and allowing Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802) to return to his estate from Siberian exile. “The national hero of Poland and hundreds of Poles were allowed to leave Russia”. (Obolenskii 166) The actual figure of Polish prisoners of war released by Paul was closer to 12 000.

The release from imprisonment of General Kosciuszko, followed by the release of other leaders of the Insurrection, including Ignacy Potocki (1750–1809) and his aide-de-camp Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, was indeed a remarkable event in the history of Polish-Russian relations. Even before he liberated Russians Novikov and Radishchev, Paul released the Pole Kosciuszko. Paul demonstrated his concern for the wellbeing of the Polish national leader in dramatic fashion. One of the first official acts of Paul I upon ascending the imperial throne was to pay a personal visit with his son, the Grand Duke Alexander, in attendance to Kosciuszko in his prison quarters in the Orlov Palace and declare him free. At a meeting in the Winter Palace several days later Kosciuszko cooperated to help secure the release of all other Polish prisoners-of-war in Russian confinement. Yet to gain their release he had to sign a formal oath of allegiance to the Russian Emperor “and this was the greatest sacrifice of his life”. He was showered with gifts by the Tsar, Tsarina and Grand Dukes, and was provided with 12 000 rubles for his needs and travel expenses to the United States. He was entertained at the imperial palace, accepted graciously all their kindnesses, yet all the while maintaining his customary reserve, reinforcing the impersonal nature of his identity as national leader and eschewing the personal. (Haiman, 1977, 32)

In the examination of Paul’s generosity towards Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz the present study also draws upon two essays devoted to the characterization and significance of gift-giving to examine the psychology of giving and to explore the nature and motives behind the gift, the giver and the recipient. Russell Belk (“The Perfect Gift”, 1996) provides a definition of the characteristics of the perfect gift: agapic love is an expression and celebration of love for the other; giving is an act that is spontaneous, affective and celebratory rather than premeditated and calculated to obtain certain ends. The properties of the gift include the sacrifice of the giver; the giver’s wish to please the recipient; the gift as luxury; the gift as uniquely

appropriate to the recipient; the recipient's reaction of surprise and delight upon receiving the gift; the nature of the gift as desirable, i.e., the recipient being desirous of the gift. The concept of gift takes into account intention and the gift itself, its intrinsic value and a desired outcome: The gift-object serves to seal a friendship. (59ff.)

In addition the insights of Maurice Mauss's study on the gift and gift-giving in primitive societies (*Essai sur le don*, 1925) provide focus for an analysis of the unexpected repercussions of the act of giving, the spirit of reciprocity and the ethics of mutual respect embodied in the gift, especially in the context of historical turmoil and revolutionary politics. Mauss viewed generosity as the basis of a new ethics founded on mutual respect, one that would foster principles of honor, disinterest and solidarity and create a spirit of reciprocity among givers and recipients of gifts. Such a spirit is essential to ensuring the happiness of individuals and communities. He also coined the expression "noble expenditure" referring to the joy of giving in public, of hospitality, and generosity bestowed and received at public and private feasts. More specifically, he was fascinated by the "force" in the thing given that lends itself to reciprocity, a circularity of giving that forms strong bonds of mutual affection and understanding and a solidarity to community, people and nation. (4)

II

Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz were shaped by common experiences in Poland, including their education at the military academy, the School for Knights (*Szkoła Rycerska*) in Warsaw, and the 1794 Uprising, their presence at Maciejowice, sufferings endured in the Peter-Paul prison, their nearly simultaneous release and their journey together to America beginning in December 1796: their stays in Gotheborg, Sweden, London, Bristol and eventually Philadelphia. Both were deeply imbued with the idea of public service and love of country and were adherents of Enlightenment values. Nevertheless they had very different temperaments and played distinctive roles on behalf of their fatherland. Though each had sojourned for eight years in the newly established American Republic, their American experience was quite disparate in the influence it had on their values and beliefs.

Kosciuszko had been radicalized by his eight years in the American Revolutionary Army (1776–1784). He fought for universal issues of liberty, equality, justice and the empowerment of the people in taking up arms aga-

inst a monarch and against an economic and political elite that deprived the American masses of economic security and political representation. He became part of a mass movement of farmers and town dwellers and black slaves who in previous decades had begun identifying themselves as a political community which eventually took up arms against established authority in insisting on human rights over property rights. Americans were people who identified themselves as citizens of a new nation who had become increasingly conscious of their natural rights as expressed in newspapers, pamphlets and sermons, at town meetings, public debate and from pulpits. They imbibed a doctrine of social justice and deep republican principles promoting popular government and individual rights, making it a duty and a right to oppose dictatorial and corrupt government, a doctrine and a deeply instilled faith which bore fruit in the revolution. Kosciuszko arrived on the American scene at the height of the struggle for national independence. He was a witness and a participant in the dramas being played out from the Canadian border to the swamplands of South Carolina, where his consciousness was raised on issues of equitable relations among humankind. The radicalized forms of political and social thinking transformed society and created a nation more unified and willing to fight for its rights. The egalitarianism of evangelical religion, the leadership roles of shoemakers in Boston (Ebenezer McIntosh) and Philadelphia (Samuel Simpson) who championed the rights of urban laborers inspired a keen understanding of political affairs. John Adams praised the common people of America as possessed by a “hereditary ardor for liberty”¹. (Nash 2005 74)

Niemcewicz, meanwhile, spent the years 1797–1807 in America, a period nearly equivalent to Kosciuszko’s in terms of years, but so completely

¹ See Nash (2005) and also Gordon S. Wood’s *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* in its entirety for an appreciation of American political values and realities that would impact Kosciuszko’s American experience. Kosciuszko came to see America’s cause as one of universal import. His American uniform, made of homespun, local homemade yarn became a symbol of his political mindset and patriotic activity, a symbol of his unity with the people and their national identification in the broadest sense at a time of national crisis. The donning of such a uniform was a form of self-purification, simplicity, and an implicit critique of the self-indulgence and the corruption of an elite class; it was a symbol of Revolution, an embrace of stoicism and public virtue. Similarly, Kosciuszko’s uniform of the Uprising was “stara chłopska sukmana z czarnymi lub zielonymi sznurami” (“an old peasant overcoat with black or green laces”); his servant, a Black American. (Szyndler 1994 52) Of related interest is the request of Paul’s wife, Maria Feodorovna, for the uniform Kosciuszko wore as leader of the Polish Uprising. Upon his leave taking of the Tsar and his family en route to America, Kosciuszko donned his American uniform.

different in terms of experience. As opposed to the revolutionary radicalized society in which Kosciuszko himself played an essential role, Niemcewicz's America was conservative, provincial, and mistrustful of Frenchmen and foreigners in general, including the Polish Nestor himself. He was limited to a comparatively passive existence as gardener and sometime farmer in an isolated community, such a stark contrast to the engaged political life he had led in the years leading up to the 1794 Uprising and the rich cultural life he led in the Polish and other European capitals. While his years in domestic retirement in Elizabeth, New Jersey, married to a member of the Livingston family eventually earned him American citizenship (1806), Niemcewicz was overjoyed to return to the bustling social and political life in the newly created Duchy of Warsaw in 1807. He was a liberal constitutionalist and a supporter of a hereditary monarchy who supported first Stanislaw August² and later Frederick August of Saxony as king of Poland. He also came to terms with the limited freedoms of the Congress Kingdom that came into being in 1815 under the aegis of Alexander I³. Niemcewicz was lionized in aristocratic circles in the Polish capital during the Congress Kingdom period and, though for years highly popular among the younger generation, including Mickiewicz and his circle in Wilno, the "Polish Patriarch" eventually became embroiled in impassioned polemics with pro-revolutionary youth. His strongly expressed anti-democratic sentiments directed at radicalized Poles whose activities culminated in the 1830 November Uprising reflect his inclination to maintain the status quo and retain peaceful relations with Moscow. His deeply engrained fear of an armed uprising would, he envisioned, end in catastrophe. His willingness to compromise with Russian authorities, perhaps under the influence of his friend and patron, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, can be seen in his acceptance of Alexander's Poland and his denunciation of would-be perpetrators on an attempted assassination of Nikolai I's viceroy, Konstantyn, in 1829⁴.

² See especially the dramatic work *Kazimierz Wielki* (1792), in which Niemcewicz draws parallels between the great Polish monarch and Stanislaw in celebrating the first anniversary of the May 3 Constitution.

³ For an indication of the compromises to Polish national integrity that Niemcewicz came to accept with respect to Alexander I, see *Napomknienia względem Dobra Publicznego*, Warszawa: Nakładem Zawadzkiego, 1814.

⁴ See the studies by Tyrowicz, Marian. Rok insurekcyjny w działalności publicznej Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza w latach 1830–1831. 57-70. Wójcicka, Zofia. Sąd nad demokratami w "Pamiętnikach" Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza z lat 1830–1831 i 1831–1834. (2002)

III

Paul began his reign in the spirit of magnanimity. The breadth of Paul's generosity from his accession to his coronation on April 5, 1797 extended to military and civil officers and men: 150 000 males serfs (total state peasants 400 000) were released from service from November 1797 to April 1798. On coronation day alone, 82 000 male serfs were liberated and granted thousands of acres of land. His gifts and rewards were viewed as a form of compensation, as a celebration of his accession, as efforts to strengthen the bonds between tsar and nation, and as a means to increase the loyalty of the ruled for their ruler. (McGrew 239-240)

It is not clear what interest Paul as Grand Duke had taken in the personal fate of Kosciuszko, who had been imprisoned in Petersburg since December 1794, yet he shared with him an idealization of knightly honor. In spite of the Russian leader's rabid fear of revolutionists, he admired Kosciuszko as a patriot⁵. On the second day of his rule, Paul inquired of the court physician Rodgers about the health of the Polish general and paid a visit to him in the company of his son together with a suite of courtiers and officers several days later⁶. The most detailed account of the meeting between Paul and Kosciuszko among Polish sources is that provided by Korzon (1894). An extensive dialog between the two Slavic leaders ensued. On 6/17 November, 1796 the [Polish] prisoners learned of Catherine's death. On the 15 (26) Paul, in the company of his son and heir, the future Alexander I, and a retinue of courtiers and military officers visited Kosciuszko in his chambers in the Marble Palace of Alexei Orlov where the Tsar informed the prisoner of his liberation:⁷

⁵ Cf. Catherine's characterization of Kosciuszko and the Poles in calling upon Suvorov to bring a quick end to the uprising: "Hrabio Aleksandrze Wasiliewiczu! Znany wam z pewnością buntownik Kościuszko, podburzywszy Polskę, w swych kontaktach z potworami rządzącymi Francją, zamierza wszędzie rozsiewać bunt na złość Rosji". ("Count Alexander Vasilievich! You are certainly aware of the rebel Kosciuszko who has stirred up Poland, and in his contacts with the monsters ruling France intends to spread rebellion everywhere to the detriment of Russia". Quoted in Serczyk 278.)

⁶ FObolenskii gives a shorthand account of the outcome of this visit: «Коцююшко присягнул на верность Павля, и тот 12 декабря 1796 года издает указ об освобождения Поляков, участвовавших в восстании. К. Уехал в Америку. Нужно ли говорить, что он нарушил присягу, сотрудинчал с легионами Яна Домбровского и Княз Иосеф, сразавшимися в составе французкой армии, вступил в общество польских республиканцев.» (Оболенский 315)

⁷ Their dialog, originally in French, appears in Korzon's Polish language version; the English translation and commentary is that of the present author.

Paul: „Czyli mnie nie poznajesz, kto jestem?” „Don't you recognize who I am?”

Kosciuszko: „Uznaję w osobie Pawła imperatora, a w darze przywróconej wolności wyższego nad zaszczyt tronu, który posiadasz”. „I recognize the Emperor in the person of Paul and in the gift of returned freedom, higher than the distinction of the throne which you occupy”. Kosciuszko, in spite of any mental and physical frailty induced by his long confinement and isolation, is quite aware of the person addressing him and is aware of „the gift of freedom” Paul has bestowed on him. Kosciuszko's dignified, yet concise and condensed reply is logically and effectively stated. He is aware of his status both as general in chief of the Polish armed forces but even more so as the sworn leader of his people, as an equal, as one head of state to another who is vitally interested and devoted to the welfare, freedom and happiness of his people and those of Russia as well; his responses appear well thought out (“do pewnego stopnia przygotowane” [“to a certain extent prepared” Dihm 197]) for one unable, at first, to respond at all. He recognizes Paul's act of generosity, the gift of freedom, as higher than the distinction of the throne itself, i.e., higher than the position Paul occupies as Russian autocrat. His praise and recognition of Paul's humanity and nobility highlight the personal qualities of Paul over the majesty of the position.

P. „Ubolewałem zawsze nad losem Wpana, ale za rządów mojej matki nic mu pomóc nie mogłem. Teraz zaś wziąłem za najpierwszy mej władzy obowiązek udarować Wpana wolnością. Wolnym już Wpan jesteś”. “I have always grieved over your fate, but during the rule of my mother I could do nothing to ease it. But now I have made it the very first duty of my reign to grant you your freedom. You are now free”. (Paul expresses sincere regret for Kosciuszko's personal fate and was helpless to alleviate the sufferings he had endured in Petersburg for the last two years of his mother's reign. Now he considers as his first duty the granting of freedom to Kosciuszko. Paul expresses his personal sympathy for the person of Kosciuszko implying as well the fateful demise of Poland – confessing to his helplessness before the august majesty of his mother, he hastens to address this wrong perpetrated by his mother “za pierwszy władzy obowiązek” [as the first duty of his reign] is to give Kosciuszko his freedom: “you are free” he is informed simply, directly, magnificently.)

Kosciuszko „skłonił się i mówił: ‘Najjaśniejszy Panie! Nigdy nie ubolewał nad losem własnym, ale nigdy ubolewać nie przestanę nad losem Oj-

czynny mojej””. „Kosciuszko bows and says: ‘Your Majesty! I have never suffered over my personal fate, but I shall never cease to suffer over the fate of my Fatherland’”. (Kosciuszko shifts the discussion from the personal level to the fate of the Polish nation, whose lack of freedom is a source of unceasing pain, a lack that Paul appears powerless to address. He also shifts the discussion from the past to the future, implying his ongoing duty in the service of his nation. Kosciuszko is not interested in personal freedom but in the fate and freedom of his fatherland. His being is bound up with the fate of the Polish people and Poland itself. Yet Paul’s efforts to atone for the crimes of his mother seem to mark a new beginning in Polish-Russian relations. Kosciuszko seeks to elevate Paul’s magnanimity to a higher level. Though Paul grants him his personal freedom, Kosciuszko never surrenders his status as a public person, as the nation’s *naczelnik*/leader.)

P. „Zapomnij Wpan o Ojczyźnie. Przyszła na nią kolej, jaką potkała tyle innych państw, których pamięć tylko w dziejach została, a w tych Wpan zawsze piękne wspomnienie mieć będziesz”. „Forget about your Fatherland. It’s time has come and gone, a fate encountered by so many other states of which only historical memory remains, and of which you will always have fond memories”. (Paul attempts to console him by encouraging him to forget about Poland and speaking of historical destiny, the essential quality of states as well as individuals and all else as part of a natural cycle: Poland has undergone the fate that many other nations have suffered over the centuries. Paul does not appear here as a born despot; rather, he aims to be sympathetic and sensitive to Kosciuszko and his responses are a form of compensation. He treats him as a victim to whom he seeks to comfort and compensate, as a general who has valiantly fought but was convincingly defeated on the battlefield, who was seriously wounded and captured and deprived of his personal freedom for the past two years. He offers Kosciuszko a broad historical perspective on the rise and fall of nations. Poland, though now relegated to the past, still is capable of arousing fond memories, a statement implying all too clearly that Poland as an independent nation has been irretrievably lost, a historical fait accompli.)

K. „Obym był raczej zapomniany, a Ojczyzna moja wolna została. Upadło zapewne państw wiele, ale upadek Polski niema podobnego przykładu”. „I would prefer that I would be forgotten and my Fatherland would become free. Certainly many states have fallen, but the fall of Poland is unprecedented”. (Kosciuszko is willing to resign himself to historical oblivion if only his fatherland were free. Personal interests are subordi-

nated to those of the nation. Poland is unlike all other fallen nations. This dismissal of the idea of Poland on Paul's part puts fire into Kosciuszko's spirit and words, the natural born rebel and freedom fighter rebels against this fact, against historical inevitability. The demise of Poland is both unique and unjustified. Kosciuszko's conviction reveals the long-held embodiment he has of himself as his nation's Timoleon ⁸.)

P. "Dlaczego, mój generale? Wszakże Greckie i Rzymskie państwa podzielone zostały". „But why, my general? After all the Greek and Roman states were divided”. (Paul is perplexed by Kosciuszko's response and shows his inability to comprehend Kosciuszko's idea of Poland and his unbending will to keep that idea alive. Paul remains ever good natured, well intentioned and complimentary of Poland in comparing it to great nations of the past: The Greek and Roman states which also rose and fell.)

K. „Prawda, Naj. Panie, ale były pokonane bronią i wprzód wolność, niż egzystencje straciły. Lecz Polska w samym powstaniu swoim i wtenczas, gdy do rządnej wolności przychodzić chciała, wtenczas gdy najwięcej energii i patriotyzmu pokazała, upadła. Państwa tamte, gdyby tylko na swych przestawały granicach, gdyby ich ambicja ograniczona była żądzą świętości i potęgi, jaka zależy od dobroci wewnętrznego rządu, gdyby chciały być tak spokojne, jak Polska od wieków zawsze być chciała: staćby jeszcze zapewne mogły”. „True, Your Majesty, but they were defeated by arms and lost their freedom before they lost their existence. But Poland in its own uprising and only then when it sought to arrive at a governed freedom, only then when it showed the greatest energy and patriotism did it fall. Those states, if they had only remained within their own borders, if only their ambition had been limited to the desire of greatness and power which derives from the goodness of internal government, if they had desired to be peaceful as Poland has always desired from time immemorial: they would surely have continued to exist”. (Kosciuszko becomes more engaged, more responsive and more expansive. He speaks of Poland as having undergone regeneration through its energy and patriotism, and having taken on an inner vitality the external framework of which should not have been destroyed. Kosciuszko is able to meet each of Paul's statements about a defeated and lost Poland with convincing arguments, statements

⁸ Timoleon of Corinth (c. 411–337), a Greek statesman and general, the defender of Greece against Carthage, known for his fervent patriotism. In his childhood, Kosciuszko admired him for his efforts to free his native land from tyranny. See Pula, 23.

which spur him to greater outbursts of impassioned eloquence, revealing luxurious restraint and utmost respect for his interlocutor, pointing out the essential difference between defeated countries of the past and the Poland of his day. Poland by its efforts in its legislature, society and on the battlefield to secure its liberty has transformed itself and energized itself into a modern nation, a more vibrant and unified one than heretofore existed and the implication is that it will eventually and inexorably come to be once again; his most solemn and sacred belief – a forward looking faith – is the key to the revival of the Polish state. The peoples of the ancient states first lost their love of freedom, then lost their political freedom, their national existence. Nemesis, in the person of Catherine, has not destroyed the Polish love for liberty, for “rządna wolność” as demonstrated to the world in the Polish May 3rd Constitution and the Polish uprising. That the ignoble motives of the partitioning parties are to blame for Poland’s demise is an attack on Catherine and her cohorts.)

P. „Ale przyznaj Wpan, że ta wasza wolność nie zgadzała się z interesem państw sąsiedzkich i że wasi rodacy sami służyli na narzędzie do zguby Ojczyzny”. „But you must admit that your idea of liberty did not coincide with the interests of Poland’s neighboring states and that your own countrymen served as tools for the demise of the Fatherland”. (Paul looks at the situation from the perspective of Poland’s partitioning neighbors and the use they made of all too willing Polish noblemen/collaborators who contributed to the demise of Poland. Paul points out the role of Poles themselves in bringing about the ruin of their own country, implicitly referring to the renegade confederates of Targowica who tried to maintain the anarchy of the past by allying themselves with Catherine and Potemkin, tools which the latter gladly made use of as a pretext for invasion and partition.)

K. „Uwolnij, mnie, W. Imperatorska Mość, od dalszego tłumaczenia się w tej mierze, albowiem o upadku mej Ojczyzny bez żywego poruszenia ani myśleć, ani mówić nie mogę”. „Release me, your Imperial Majesty, from further explanations in this manner, since I can neither think nor speak about the fall of my Fatherland without painful emotions”. (Kosciuszko makes a diplomatic attempt to restrain what would be a heated response on the matter of the confederates of Targowica and other traitors to the Polish cause. The topic appears to be too painful for Kosciuszko to continue. The pent up feelings brought on by the isolation of his imprisonment appear to be reaching the breaking point.)

P. „, Nie uraża to mnie, owszem, dla tego więcej Wpana szacuję, bo pierwszy raz zdarza mi się mówić z obywatelem, w którym uznaję, że prawdziwie kocha Ojczyznę. Gdyby tak większa przynajmniej część Polaków myślała, jak Wpan, jeszczeby się Polska utrzymać była mogła”. „It does not offend me, of course; rather it makes me respect you all the more, for this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak with a citizen whom I see truly loves his Fatherland. If at least the greater part of Poles had think as you do, Poland would have been able to survive”. (Paul praises Kosciuszko, recognizing him as a true citizen who deeply loved and served his fatherland. He asserts that if a majority of Poles had felt as Kosciuszko does, Poland would still exist. Paul takes nothing personally, nothing as an affront to his official person as tsar and autocrat; rather, he praises the Pole for his strong love of country; Paul is gratified that he has been able to converse with such a patriotic citizen⁹.)

K. „Ta część większa, N. Panie, była z pewnością. Gdybyś, WIMość, mógł być świadkiem tylu cnót, tylu patriotyzmów, których dali dowody niepospolite w czasie ostatniego powstania! Wiem, jak starano się fałszywe i najgorsze dać WIMości wyobrażenie o narodzie naszym, wystawiano go bowiem w oczach całego świata, jako hordę łotrów niespokojnych, niecierpiących rządu i prawa, a przeto niewartych egzystencji. Cnotliwy i powszechny zapał do ulepszenia jedynie losu Ojczyzny, wydobycia się z ucisku i nieładu buntem nazwano: chęci najlepsze dobrego obywatelstwa poczytano za winę i za skutek rozhukanego jakobinizmu; na koniec nie tylko przeciwko wszelkiej słuszności, ale przeciwko prawdziwym interesom Rosji zniszczenie tej nieszczęśliwej Ojczyzny przez rozbiór zupełny jej kraju za najzbawienniejszą radę podano. Ile stąd zgorszenia niebezpiecznego dla losu państw wszystkich, ile okropnych skutków, ile nieszczęścia powszechnego ofiar! Gdyby ich razem zebrany widok mógł się zbliżyć do WIMości, gdyby go nie zasłaniał ci, którzy wszystko za nic wazą, byle własnym posłużyli pożytkom i dla tego tylko tron otaczają, aby do niego prawda i ludzkość przystępu nie miały: tak wspaniałe, tak dobre serce WIMości wzruszone by zaiste zostało losem narodu naszego”. „The greater part of them surely were, Your Majesty. If you could have been a witness, your Ma-

⁹ Paul concludes his response with words that echo the Polish national anthem: *Gdyby tak była większa przynajmniej część myślała Polaków jak Wpan, jeszcze by Polska utrzymać się była mogła*”; a comment that Kosciuszko would affirm more emphatically as *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła...*

jesty, to so much virtue, to so many outpourings of patriotism of which so much eloquent proof was given during this last uprising! I know that many have attempted to give you a false picture and the worst imaginings of our nation, which was presented in the eyes of the entire world as a horde of rebellious scoundrels unwilling to yield to government and law and because of that unworthy of existence. A virtuous and widespread zeal only for improving the fate of the Fatherland, releasing it from suffering and discord was called rebellion: the best intentions for good citizenship were considered a crime and the outcome of unbridled jacobinism; finally not only against all justice but against the genuine interests of Russia itself, the destruction of this unhappy Fatherland and its subsequent total partitioning was referred to as the most vital cure. From this how much worse and dangerous for the fate of all nations, how many terrible repercussions, how much widespread and needless suffering of so many victims! If their collective portrait could be placed before your eyes, if those worthless individuals who surround you would not shield you from the sight of it, all those who but serve their own interests and only for that surround you on your throne so that you would be cut off from all truth and humanity: you with your great and good heart would be truly moved by the fate of our nation". (This highly emotional outburst is remarkable, among other reasons, for Paul's understanding, patience in listening and graciousness in allowing his just freed prisoner to orate on Poland's recent history, declare Russian interests in the cause of freedom and rebuke the Emperor's ministers. It is clear that Kosciuszko is possessed of all his mental faculties and speaks on equal terms with the Russian autocrat. As Paul insists on the Poles themselves being responsible for their ruin, Kosciuszko can no longer speak for and of the nation as a whole. The mention of renegade opportunistic Poles at the Petersburg court and on their now enlarged estates inspires Kosciuszko's longest and most elevated defense of the patriotism of Poles and their worthiness to restore their nation. With the words "tylu cnót, tylu patriotyzmów" he defends his countrymen from the denigrating epithet of reckless jacobins; he further declares that an independent Poland would not represent a danger to Russia nor to its "true interests" of freedom—a vision evidently not accessible to Paul since the throne is surrounded by self-seeking sycophants and jaundiced advisers (including members of the suite present at this exchange), yet he praises Paul for his good heart capable of being moved by the fate of Poland. The perspicacity with which Kosciuszko sees himself, his role and Paul's own nature as individual and ruler is remarkable. His greatness of soul

is given eloquent expression, more than a match for Paul's generous spirit. Kosciuszko does not attempt to ingratiate himself to Paul as one beholden to him for his personal freedom, but reveals himself in the full integrity of his person as one who has solemnly dedicated himself to the wellbeing of his people, one whose devotion to universal principles of equality and liberty pertain as completely to Russians as to Poles and Americans. In the course of the exchange Kosciuszko's stature grows immensely, as if he were the benefactor, aware of the sensitivity of Paul's nature and his capacity to do good for Russians and Poles alike.)

P. (Obróciwszy się do swoich generałów.) „Patrzcie! Co za żywość” (turning to his generals) ‘Just look! What vitality!’ (Paul cannot help but be amazed, commenting only on Kosciuszko's elevated and animated manner. Paul does not gainsay any of the criticisms Kosciuszko directs against the previous regime; rather his silence on this matter implies tacit agreement. He replies to Kosciuszko's momentous rejoinder with breathless astonishment: *Patrzcie! Co za żywość!*” inviting the silent members of his suite to share in his wonder at the transformation taking place before their very eyes, the return to life of the Polish national leader.)

K. „Daruj, Najjaśn. Panie, mogę się uniósł za daleko... może...”. „Forgive me your Majesty, perhaps I got a bit carried away... perhaps...”. (Kosciuszko, trying to regain his composure, is somewhat embarrassed by his impassioned discourse and excuses himself for getting carried away.)

P. „Ale dałeś mi do myślenia, mówiłeś do serca mego. Pożegnaj Wpana; teraz proszę nie myśleć o niczym więcej, jak tylko o zdrowiu swoim. Dałem rozkazy, aby mu na niczym nie zbywało, co do wygody jego należy. Jeżeli masz co zadać, mów śmiało i zwiierz się jako przyjacielowi, bo jestem prawdziwym przyjacielem Wpana i chcę, abyś wzajemnie był moim”. „But you have given me much to think about, you have spoken to my heart. I take your leave; now I ask that you think of nothing but your health. I have given orders to ensure that you are lacking nothing that you might need for your comfort and convenience. If you have something to add, speak boldly and address me as your friend, because I am your true friend and I want you to be mine in return”. (Paul displays great sincerity in taking to heart the words of Kosciuszko. He reverts to the personal level by expressing concern for his health and by assuring the Polish general that any and all needs and wants to make him more comfortable will be attended to. He states clearly that he is a genuine friend of Kosciuszko, expressing the hope that the Pole will trust him and will consider him a friend. In spite of his reputation for

being quick to anger and lacking control over his emotions, Paul displays a consistent good-natured tenor throughout the conversation, receptive to Kosciuszko's ideas, declaring himself as his friend, while expressing the hope of being reciprocated. In spite of the formality of his person and the presence of the Imperial suite, an intimate exchange has emerged in which the Russian autocrat demonstrated his personal concern and care for Kosciuszko. By exhibiting gracious patience in hearing him out as the Pole waxed eloquent, and repeating his desire for friendship, he reveals his inclination to maintain the exchange on a personal level. His very last word is "friendship"; yet Kosciuszko effectively resists forging a personal relationship as he reasserts his public status and demonstrates clearly his steadfast role as national leader. Kosciuszko himself does not use the word "friend"; rather he restricts himself to expressions of respect and gratitude.)

K. „Szacunek najwyższy i najczulsza wdzięczność będą zawsze moim obowiązkiem”. (471-473) (Kosciuszko concludes the conversation by expressing a most deeply felt gratitude that he will ever consider his obligation to maintain.)

No mention is made in the course of this exchange of an oath of loyalty. Paul maintains the level of discourse on the personal level as that of friend to friend and not emperor to subject. The "gift" of liberation is regarded as a form of compensation for the sufferings Kosciuszko endured that were brought on by his mother. The status of Poland is outside his capacity to change.

In terms of Belk's understanding of gift, it can be said that from Paul's perspective, the gift of freedom was altruistic and free from personal motives other than the expressed hope of mutual friendship. Paul appears to have liberated Kosciuszko without expecting any personal gain in return. He displays genuine concern and respect, even deeply felt admiration, for the recipient of his generous, unsolicited action. Though his liberation of Kosciuszko appears to have been premeditated as one of his many efforts to undo his mother's policies and to atone for the suffering they caused, it also appears spontaneous in as much as Paul makes a personal unannounced appearance to deliver the gift himself. Throughout the exchange, from beginning to end, Paul generates good will and expresses his good intentions on behalf of Kosciuszko supported by the power he wields as autocrat to please and make the gift a reality. While the act of liberation of a political prisoner cannot be considered unique, in the history of Polish-Russian relations such a generous act seems truly remarkable and even unprecedented. The ends Paul seeks to obtain are those of peace and good-

will. He himself is assured of the desirability of the gift for Kosciuszko, an individual who devoted a significant part of his own life to fighting for the freedom of others. The intrinsic value of the gift is immeasurable as life itself. Paul's intentions are indeed noble and he clearly states a desired outcome of forming and sealing a friendship.

From Mauss's perspective, it is interesting to note the inherent "force" of the gift itself and the unexpected turns in the exchange between Paul and Kosciuszko that gave the former much to think about. It certainly provided for a deeper mutual understanding of the two and an appreciation of Kosciuszko's patriotism, his broad understanding of freedom and the nature of the Polish people as nation; it also made manifest Kosciuszko's appreciation of Paul's goodness and good will. Yet the gift evidently did not create the spirit of reciprocity Paul desired. His efforts to cement the relationship with personal friendship went unheeded by Kosciuszko who eschewed the personal and made no mention of friendship; rather, he spoke repeatedly of his concern for freedom on the national and universal levels. The granting of the gift also produced unexpected repercussions stemming from Paul's unconditional act of generosity going beyond the recipient of Kosciuszko and extending eventually to all Poles in Russian prisons. The spirit of reciprocity is evidenced in Paul's gift which had the potential of creating the good will to create harmonious relations between individual Russian and Pole, even though he only saw the Polish state as a thing of the past; Kosciuszko's expressed concern for the common interests of Russians and Poles would have implied deep repercussions for the status quo.

Though Paul's gift of freedom as well as other material gifts with which he and his family members showered upon Kosciuszko were made in the spirit of hospitality and generosity, the Tsar's peaceful gestures toward Russia's vanquished enemy elicited widespread suspicion among those in various powerful circles within the capital, including Paul's advisors, ministers, and other courtiers, members of the pro-Russian Polish faction at court and foreign envoys, especially those from the partitioning powers of Prussia and Austria. So deeply felt was their anxiety and concern for their vested interests that a ploy to undermine the unconditional nature of the gift was successfully executed. This was done through the granting of an additional unsolicited gift of land and Russian souls to Kosciuszko, a gift conditioned upon the signing of an oath of loyalty, a gift which bound him and made him beholden to the Russian autocracy in such a way that it would essentially negate the gift of freedom. (Niemcewicz, Notes 220-21)

A later conversation centered upon the freeing of Kosciuszko's imprisoned comrades in arms elicited an assuring response from Paul: "Będą wolni, ufaj słowu mojemu". ("They will be free, trust my word".) Paul was true to his word: a comprehensive list of Polish prisoners to be liberated was compiled posthaste and presented to the Tsar and immediately signed by him. At a subsequent interview Kosciuszko received the Tsar's permission to leave for America. (Korzon 474-475)

Yet both the release of the Polish prisoners and the permission that allowed Kosciuszko to leave Russia and sail to America were made conditional upon swearing an oath of loyalty. The wording of the oath is as follows:

"Przysięga na wierność. Ja, niżej podpisany, obiecuję i przysięgam przed Wszecmocnym Bogiem na świętej Jego Ewangelii, iż powinienem i chcę być poddanym dobrym, wiernym i posłusznym Jego Imperatorskiego Majestatu Pawłowi Piotrowiczowi, memu prawdziwemu i prawemu Gospodarowi Samowładcy całej Rosji, i Najmilszemu Jego Synowi Wielkiemu Książęciu Aleksandrowi Pawłowiczowi, Imperatorstwa prawemu Dziedzicowi: utrzymywać i bronić, ile będę mógł, prawa i przedostojności niniejsze i następne, które się ściągają do władzy i powagi Jego Imperatorskiego Majestatu, a dlatego w potrzebie zawołany, krwią własną utrzymywać i całą moją siłą podług możności do usługi i pożytku tegoż Imperatorstwa we wszelkich przypadkach obstawać. Tak przysięgam przed Bogiem i przed jego Najwyższym Sądem, w czym mi, Boże, dopomóż. Całuję świętą Jego Ewangelię i Krzyż Zbawiciela mojego".

Pod rotą przysięgi widnieje podpis: "T. Kosciuszko"

("Oath of loyalty. I, the undersigned, promise and swear before Almighty God on His holy Bible that I ought to and want to be a good, loyal and obedient subject of His Imperial Majesty Paul Petrovich, my true and lawful Ruler, the Autocrat of All Russia, and his Most Gracious Son, Grand Prince Alexander Pavlovich, rightful Heir of the Imperial title: to uphold and defend, as far as I am able, the laws and properties now and forthcoming which pertain to the rule and dignity of His Imperial Majesty and that is why whenever called upon in the event of need, I will uphold with my own blood and with all my strength abide by and support in all events in accordance with the needs and benefits of that Imperial Majesty. Thus I swear before God and before his Supreme Judgment in which God help me. I kiss His Holy Bible and the Cross of my Savior". (Following the text of the oath appears the signature: "T. Kosciuzko" (Askenazy, *Przysięga* s. 489, przyp. 1, Dihm, 206.)

The tone and wording of the oath differ dramatically from that of the personalized exchange between Paul and Kosciuszko upon his liberation. The evident authorial intent behind the writing of the oath is to render the person of the autocrat and the institution of autocracy on par with divinity itself in terms of majesty, power and authority. At the same time it diminishes Kosciuszko's status to that of a mere subject who not only must serve the emperor whenever He deems it appropriate, regardless of circumstance, but must do it of his own good will; that is, Kosciuszko, in keeping to the spirit of the oath, is obliged to yield his own will and merge it with the all-embracing will of the Russian sovereign. No hint of graciousness, of willing to please, of a proffered friendship is present. Yet Kosciuszko, under duress, was persuaded to sign his name to the document. Declaring himself a loyal subject of the Tsar, acknowledging the non-existence of Poland and recognizing that his homeland had been incorporated into the Russian Empire went against everything that Kosciuszko stood for and believed in¹⁰. The compromise Kosciuszko made to his sense of honor and duty to country in signing the pledge was enormous: "więc złożył nakazaną przysięgę w ręce niegodnego rodaka, Jerzego Wielhorskiego, dawnego targowiczana, wymawiając każdy wyraz wstrętnej dla siebie rotę i kładąc niezawodnie swój podpis na sporządzonym zawczasu dokumencie. Nie mówił nikomu z najbliższych, jak wielką spełnił dla zwyciężonych ziomków ofiarę; lecz z męczeńskiej jego postaci promieniował taki urok spełnionej ofiary duchowej i wyższości ponad wszystkimi, że ulegali mu i swoi i obcy – na obu półkulach świata". ("Thus he delivered the required oath into the hands of his unworthy countryman, Jerzy Wielhorski, a former renegade of Targowica, pronouncing each phrase of the text so revolting for himself and inexorably placed his signature on the document prepared ahead of time". 477) Korzon, drawing upon Niemcewicz's prison diary, identifies the author of the oath as the Pole Jerzy Wierlhorski, one of the confederates of Targowica resident at the Russian court. Yet the document appears to have served the purpose of all those opposed to his pacific policies. (Notes 221)

¹⁰ Paul's official title indicates the incorporation of provinces of the former Commonwealth: "Paul the First, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias: Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, Tsar of Kazan', Tsar of Astrakhan', Tsar of Siberia, Tsar of Kherson-Tavride, Ruler of Pskov and Grand Prince of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volhynia, Podolia, Prince of Estlandia, Lifliandia, Kurlandia and Semigalia, Samogitia, Korelia, Tver, Iugoria, Perm, Viatsk and other regions, Ruler and Grand Prince of Novagorod of Nizov, Chernigor, Riazan', Polotsk, Postov, Iaroslav, Belozersk, Udorsk, Obdorsk, Kondiisk, Vishepsk, Mstislavsk and All Northern Lands, Lord and Ruler of the Iverian Land, Kartalin and Georgian Tsars and the Kabardine Land, Cherkask and Mountain Princes and other inherited lands etc., etc., etc. (Peskov 20)

Undertaking such a fateful step was all the more galling for Kosciuszko in light of the pledge of faith and self-sacrifice the Polish leader made on March 24, 1794 in Krakow at the onset of the insurrection, a time of hope and forged national unity. The text of Kosciuszko's oath reads as follows: "Przysięga wykonana przez TADEUSZA KOSCIUSZKĘ Najwyższego Naczelnika Siły zbrojnej Narodowej. Ja TADEUSZ KOSCIUSZKO przysięgam w obliczu Boga całemu Narodowi Polskiemu, iż powierzonej mi władzy na niczyj prywatny ucisk nie użyję, lecz jedynie jej dla obrony całości granic, odzyskania samowładności narodu i ugruntowania powszechnej wolności używać będę. Tak mi Panie Boże dopomóż i niewinna męka Syna Jego". ("Oath made by TADEUSZ KOSCIUSZKO, the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces. I TADEUSZ KOSCIUSZKO swear in the presence of God to the entire Polish Nation that I will not use the power invested in me for any private advantage, but only for the defense of its borders as a whole, for regaining the autonomy of the nation and establishing universal liberty. So help me God and the guiltless suffering of his Son". Oleksowicz 235) Kosciuszko takes pains to absolve himself of any self-serving interests or self-glorifying intents in taking on the role of national leader; rather he pledges this solemn oath as a formal dedication to defend his nation, preserve its autonomy and secure liberty for the entire nation. Variations of the oath in the name of Kosciuszko were made throughout the country in the course of the uprising¹¹.

¹¹ *Akt powstania w Kurlandii* published on 25 June 1794 a declaration of loyalty to the uprising and Kosciuszko as its leader. The act of uprising began with the collective swearing of a vow of loyalty: *Akt powstania Obywateli Księstwa Kurlandzkiego*: "My szlachta obywatele i mieszkańcy Księstwa Kurlandzkiego, troskliwi o całość, wolność i niepodległość naszą, w czasie kiedy naród polski i litewski zrzuciwszy z siebie jarzmo przemocy wzywa nas do wspólnego powstania, jako obywatele z dawna tegoż narodu inkorporowani i jednej ojczyzny synowie, bynajmniej nie wahamy się dążyć z współbracią naszą do wspólnego uszczęśliwienia... stosowny więc do aktu krakowskiego województwa, jako też powstania całego narodu polskiego i litewskiego czyniąc związek; za Najwyższego Naczelnika siły zbrojnej całego narodu ze wszystkimi przyległościami, państwami, księstwami i województwami, Tadeusza Kościuszkę uznajemy... w porządku utrzymania suk ubrojonego Księstwa Kurlandzkiego, jednomyślnie obywatela Henryka Mirbacha za generała majora obieramy, obowiązując go miłością ojczyzny do wierności Księstwu naszemu, a do posłuszeństwa Najwyższemu Naczelnikowi Kościuszce, przy zachowaniu zupełnej karności podkomendnych jego... a tych wszystkich, którzy by przeciwiali się otwarcie czy po kryjomu zbawiennym zamiarom naszym albo też nieprzyjacielowi usługiwali, od dnia dzisiejszego bądź w ciągu dwóch niedziel do świętego nie przystąpił związku, za zdrajców kraju mieć będziemy". The people gathered into the church in Lipawa where they made their vow of loyalty to the uprising and signed the declaration. The gentrymen were obligated to make a promise to free their peasants, which was not a part of the official declaration. The celebrations afterwards were punctuated by many toasts to the honor of Kosciuszko. (235-236)

Paul gave Kosciuszko 12 000 rubles and 1000 souls which the Polish general had requested to exchange for a monetary sum equivalent of 60 000 rubles. Korzon notes that the latter sum was never received as no further mention of it was made. Kosciuszko was also the recipient of a “pyszna karetta” (“fine carriage”) custom-made for his convenience, a sable coat and cap, felt boots, food for the journey, table linen. “Niemcewicz received a coat, cap and boots”. (478) Paul, the oath notwithstanding, had received Kosciuszko as one of the family. Upon leaving the Petersburg court and Russia itself, Kosciuszko, in his American uniform, thanked Paul for his generosity and goodness¹². (478)

Having to swear such a solemn oath was intended to undermine Kosciuszko’s identity as national leader. It was “terrible” (as expressed by Niemcewicz) in its repercussions for the conflict it presented between Kosciuszko’s strong sense of soldierly honor in keeping his word and of his earlier pledge of personal responsibility for the fate of the Polish nation. (Notes 223) Being true to himself and his oath of March 24, 1794 would preserve his moral authority as the last leader of independent Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Though his sense of indignation in agreeing to sign such a statement would be mollified by the release of 12,000 soldiers/prisoners of war, any refractoriness in refusing to sign the oath of loyalty would have resulted in their continued imprisonment and an abrupt end to the magnanimity of a ruler intolerant of insubordination. Moreover, making such a vow of submission and adhering to its wording and spirit would have transformed Kosciuszko into an acknowledged subject of Paul, making it impossible for him to continue to serve his native land and would render his vow made in Krakow null and void. In maintaining his sense of honor, he understood that in signing such an oath and once freed from prison he would be obliged to be faithful to the vow which proscribed him from attempting to take up arms against Russia in the cause of his nation’s freedom. In addition, Kosciuszko’s signature as commanding general provided the sanction for other patriotic Polish soldiers to follow suit in formal acknowledgement of the dependence and subordination of Polish interests to the Russian autocrat. Thus, the Polish cause would lose a sympathetic

¹² The Empress asked Kosciuszko for the peasant coat he had worn as leader of the uprising as well as some seeds brought back from America; she in turn presented him with a turner’s lathe valued at 1000 rubles together with a collection of cameos with portraits of the entire Imperial family. Kosciuszko presented the Empress with a snuff box of his own making. (478)

hearing in European courts in that the extraordinary acts of generosity bestowed on the Polish prisoners from the hand of the Tsar would resound not only in Petersburg but in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London and even distant Philadelphia.

Kosciuszko found it impossible to abide by the oath as Paul's subject and so he was determined to free himself of his bondage at the first opportunity, regardless of the consequences. One of Kosciuszko's first acts on landing in France,¹³ where he expected to assume the leadership of the newly formed Polish Legions fighting under the French, was to write a letter to Tsar Paul renouncing his oath of allegiance and refusing to accept his gift of money. His intention was undermined by the Directory in having him sign a prepared communication couched in terms hostile to Paul and offensive to Americans at the time of the Quasi War (see Cobbet, *Porcupine's Works*, X 88). Kosciuszko's missive resulted in the immediate issuing of an ukaz¹⁴ by Paul ordering Kosciuszko's arrest, should he appear with the borders of the Russian empire, while agents of the partitioning

¹³ Kosciuszko's return to Europe in 1798, was seen by the Russians as a hostile act subversive of European stability, labeling him an "awanturnik" or rabble-rouser (Szyndler 1994,34).

¹⁴ The text of the decree in its original Russian is as follows: *Объявление Управляющего Литовскою Всем Литовским жителям.*

По вступлении нашего Всеавгустейшаго Государя ИМПЕРАТОРА ПАВЛА Перваго, на Всероссийски Престол, ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКОЕ ВЕЛИЧЕСТВО, нашед известаго Косцюшку в заключении, подвигом своего великодушия не только его освободил, но по получении от него присяги в верности подданству, оказал ему Высочайшую милость пожалованием деревень, а вместо оных денежной суммы, и отпустил для излечения его болезни. Но как теперь открылось, что вместо сохранения верности к ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКОМУ ВЕЛИЧЕСТВУ, исполнения его слова и признания л таковым великим благодеянием ГОСУДАРЯ ИМПЕРАТОРА ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА, и всех благоустроенных Держав; то и объявляется сим и каждому, дабы, в случае появления его в пределах Всероссийских каждый благонамеренный старался открыть его пребывание, переписку и сношение, и самого его поймать и представить блмжаайшей воинской команде или Земскому Начальству, в достоверений за таковое усердие к слгжбе ЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА,и исполнение своего долга, особливаго воздаяния; на противуже того буде кто отважится скрыть его, или входить с ним в какие либо сношения, или же зная об оных и сообщниках его, не известить о том Правительство, тот сам за изменника е возмутителя почтенъ и законному за то осуждению и наказанию подверженъ будетъ безъ всякаго послабления.

Сие объявдгие не только везде в Литовской Губернии предписываю опубликовать немедленно, но и читать его для в енародднаго известия три Воскресения сряду во всех приходских Церквахъ.

Дано въ Вильне Ноября 3 (14) дня 1798 года Подписано: Князь Николай Репнинъ (507-509).

powers were to keep “his every move under strict surveillance,” while preventing Kosciuszko from entering Polish lands or writing to his friends and family members therein residing¹⁵. Kosciuszko’s letter follows:

Najjaśniejszy Panie!

Korzystam z pierwszych chwil wolności, której używam pod opiekuńczymi prawami największego i najszlachetniejszego narodu, ażeby Ci odesłać dar, do przyjęcia którego zmusiły mię pozory dobroci Twojej i okrutne zachowanie się Twych ministrów. Jeżeli przyjąć go się zgodziłem, to niech Najjaśniejszy Pan przypisze to jedynie nieprzepartej sile przywiązania, które mam dla rodaków, towarzyszy nieszczęść moich, oraz nadziei usłużenia jeszcze ojczyźnie. Tak, powtarzam Ci to, Najjaśniejszy Panie, i pragnę Ci to oświadczyć. Zdawało mi się, że nieszczęsne położenie moje wzruszyło Twe serce, ale ministrowie Twoi i ich satelici nie postąpili ze mną stosownie do Twych życzeń. Toteż, gdyby się ośmielili przypisywać memu dobrowolnemu postanowieniu czy, który na mnie wymusili, odsłonię ich gwałt i przewrotność przed Tobą i przed wszystkimi ludźmi, którzy znają cenę honoru, i oni tylko niech będą odpowiedzialni przed Tobą, Najjaśniejszy Panie, za rozgłoszenie ich niegodziwości.

Racz, Najjaśniejszy Panie, przyjąć wyznanie mojego szacunku.

(„Your Majesty! I take advantage of the first moments of freedom which I am enjoying under the protective laws of the greatest and noblest nation in order to return to you the gift the reception of which was forced upon me by the appearance of your goodness and the cruel action of your ministers. If I had indeed agreed to receive it, then may Your Majesty attribute it to the invincible strength of attachment I have for my countrymen, comrades in misery and misfortune, as well as the hope of continuing to be of service to my fatherland. So I repeat to You, Your Majesty, and I hope you take it to heart. It seems to me that my unfortunate situation touched Your heart, but Your ministers and their agents did not act in accord with Your wishes. Furthermore, if they had the nerve to attribute my decision made in good faith, which they forced upon me, I now reveal their violence and underhandedness to You and to all people who know the price of honor, and may they be answerable to You, Your Majesty, for the publication of their unworthiness.

May Your Majesty accept the acknowledgement of my respect”.)

¹⁵ As a consequence of Kosciuszko’s renunciation of his oath of allegiance, Niemcewicz was left stranded in America cut off from communications and financial assistance from his family and friends in Poland under threat of imprisonment and confiscation of property. (Budka xxvi)

The letter is significant for Kosciuszko's efforts to deflect his outrage from the Tsar himself onto the persons of the ministers who persuaded Paul to have the oath administered to all the liberated Poles. The letter was sent to Sieyes, the French emissary in Berlin, with a request of entrusting it to Count Panin. Sieyes refused the request, expecting a rejection and so sent it under the address of the Directory and it made its way to Panin "pod największą tajemnicą" (under the greatest secrecy") on the condition that it would be sent directly to the tsar who received it on October 2. At the same time Kosciuszko also submitted the letter on August 4 to two journals: *Ami des Lois* and *Moniteur Universel* where Kosciuszko's declaration was made public knowledge. The *Moniteur* added the editorial note: "Wszystko, co pochodzi od tego bohatera, budzi tak potężny interes, że pośpieszamy go ogłosić, nie biorąc na siebie wszelako żadnej odpowiedzialności za zdania wyrażone w tej pewnego rodzaju protestacji, ani też nie chcąc się sprzeciwiać życzeniom mocarstw, które w tej chwili układają się o pokój ogólny". („Everything that stems from this hero arouses such powerful interest that we hasten to publish it, not taking upon ourselves any responsibility for the opinions expressed in this certain type of protest, nor desiring to go against the wishes of the powers that at this moment are forming a general peace"). Thus Paul could have read the letter without the assistance of Count Haugewitz who had sent the letter to Panin, he could have read all the expressions of bitterness completely unexpected and completely undeserved from his perspective. (Korzon 505)

Paul's response to Razumowski was dated Petersburg, 2 December (1798 old style) and reflected his disdain at the ungrateful act of a Russian subject and man of honor who had sworn fealty to him as Emperor:

„Z zadziwieniem odebrawszy za pośrednictwem waszym, panie Hrabio, pakiet od Kościuszki i, wyrażając moje niezadowolenie, odsyłam go nazad, rozkazując, jakim zechcecie sposobem, zwrócić ten list Kościuszcze i uwiadomić, że ja od zdrajców nic nie przyjmuję”. (“In a state of bewilderment having received through you, Count, a package from Kosciuszko and, expressing my dissatisfaction, I am sending it back, ordering in whatever way it may please you to return this letter to Kosciuszko and inform him that I do not accept anything from traitors”). 505-506)

Returning the money would not have earned him the epithet of traitor, though from Paul's perspective it smacked of ingratitude. Rather Paul referred to him as a traitor for breaking the oath of loyalty and taking

up arms in the service of partitioned Poland, a vassal state. Paul did not acknowledge the pressure under which Kosciuszko found himself nor the underhandedness of the Russian ministers and did not deign to justify his behavior. Kosciuszko was in no position to bargain or to cavil. From Paul's perspective, Kosciuszko had been a prisoner of war and he had received his freedom. Since Poland no longer existed it had no legal basis in the international community to wage war against Russia.

Upon first setting foot in France, Kosciuszko compromised his own deeply felt sense of honor for the sake of his countrymen and his nation, since in order to free himself unconditionally he would not have agreed to submitting himself to Paul's authority as his subject. Now, with the crisis of the moment, with the emergence of the Polish Legions, when his countrymen and nation had summoned him to service he once again dedicated himself to the national cause. From this position even his promise to never engage in warfare against Russia and its allies, although denied from one perspective, and upheld from another, lost its validity and force. (506)

Kosciuszko made a final oath to serve the cause of Polish freedom during his sojourn in Paris when he became a member of the Society of Polish Republicans (TRP), a political organization established on 21 September 1798. The organization was made up primarily of radicals from the Prussian partition of Poland established for the purpose of preparing the country to undertake the armed struggle for independence and its leaders made great efforts to enlist Kosciuszko. In April 1799 Alojzy Orchowski conducted numerous conversations with Kosciuszko, familiarized him with the *Ustawa przedspołeczna*, the manifesto of the organization, eventually persuading him to join the organization on 6 August, 1799. At that time, upon joining Kosciuszko made a "przysięgę i zaręczenie" (An oath and solemn promise): "Przysięga zobowiązywała Kościuszkę do usilnego dążenia do oswobodzenia narodu spod tyranii i uformowania rządu demokratycznego na zasadach prawdziwej równości; do przygotowania w najbliższym czasie powstania; do nienawidzenia tyranii, bezrządu i monarchizmu; do wyrzeczenia się szlachectwa, godności i wszelkich przywilejów, a także do poświęcenia połowy majątku dla ratowania ojczyzny i dla dopięcia celu Towarzystwa. („The oath obligated Kosciuszko to strive tirelessly for the liberation of the nation from tyranny and for the formation of a democratic government based on the principles of genuine equality; for preparing for an immediate uprising; for a hatred of tyranny, anarchy and monarchy; for renouncing on principle the noble class, distinctions and all privileges and also for dedicating one-half

of his property on behalf of the fatherland and for the Society in attaining its goals". Szyndler 325)

IV

Niemcewicz's own insightful views regarding Paul include his feelings of gratitude as recorded in his *Notes sur ma captivité*, which was completed before Paul's untimely end in 1801. In it Niemcewicz describes his time in Petersburg upon his release and comments knowingly on Paul's character: "Whenever I passed through the quays, and saw, on the other side of the Neva, the bastions of the fortress, where I had suffered so long, the horror I felt made me turn away my eyes. But gratitude as well as justice obliges me to say that these fears and alarms, being consequences of despotism, existed in the same degree under the last reign. Catherine, however, exercised her tyranny with a degree of hypocrisy unknown to her son. It is our [May 3rd] constitution, perhaps, that produces our virtues and vices. The springs of his, [i.e., Paul's] being long subdued by fear, burst forth violently as soon as the power of pressure was removed. The Emperor Paul is passionate, but, I believe, not a bad man. Imbued with the principle that nations are the property of sovereigns, and ought blindly to obey their caprices, the least contradiction is, in his eyes, an unpardonable crime, and then, there is no excess which he is not capable of committing; there is no reflection,--no limit either to his favor or his resentment. He would send Suwarow into the heart of Kamchatka, as quickly, and with the same facility as he would declare him his equal, and give orders that the people should throw themselves upon their knees before him. It is not known whether those fits of madness frequently noticed in him, are a disease generally common to crowned heads, or, as it is said, the effect of a drink which his mother used to give him. Whatever it may be, certain it is, that had not Catherine died suddenly, Paul I would never have ascended the throne; for it is no longer a secret that she wished to declare him unfit for governing, and to appoint as her successor the young Grand Duke Alexander-Pawlowicz. The people having already obtained from Paul some relief, and the soldiers an increase of pay, prefer him to Catherine, but it is not so with the aristocracy. He sows less corruption and spares them less. It is very fortunate for him that his Empress (a rare instance!) is fond neither of intrigue nor power, and that Alexander-Pawlowicz, the presumptive heir to the throne, is a prince endowed with the most amiable qualities, otherwise he would not have reigned six months.

In spite of all these extravagancies and follies, Paul I had one virtue, which princes believe they may dispense with, I mean justice, even in politics. He was the only one of all the allied monarchs who took up arms without any view of aggrandizement or interest. He said himself, and I have no doubt sincerely, that, if he had reigned at the time, far from co-operating in the partition of Poland, he would have been strongly opposed to it. (245-249)

Niemcewicz provides a fair and knowledgeable account of Paul both in terms of his essentially fair-minded yet capricious character, his difficult relationship with his mother and as Russian autocrat. While it is true that Paul himself had been opposed to the partitions of Poland, the fate of Poland was viewed as a *fait accompli*. The restoration of Poland remained a complex international affair beyond his powers to address.

Perhaps the most noteworthy and least known of Niemcewicz's sentiments regarding Paul were those written in a poem addressed to Paul I written shortly before his departure from Petersburg in December, 1796. His expression of admiration and praise of and gratitude to Paul are in strong contrast to anti-Russian sentiments so frequently encountered in his writings. In the words of his biographer, P. Czaja: „Treść jego zaskakuje, wręcz zdumiewa, nie pasując do antyrosyjskich urazów Niemcewicza. Pozwala jednak wejrzeć głęboko w stan jego duszy bezpośrednio po opuszczeniu więziennego baru-ku ponurej pietropawłowskiej twierdzy. Autor daje w nim wyraz uwielbieniu i uznaniu dla Pawła, dla jego cywilizowanego oblicza, wcale nie dyktatorskiego, jak ze zdumieniem odkrywa. Wszem i wobec obwieszcza, że przed takim carem »szczyrze zgina kolana«” („The content of the poem astounds, it is positively shocking, not at all in harmony with the anti-Russian diatribes of Niemcewicz. It allows one, however, to glance deeply into the state of his soul immediately after his release from the prison cell of the gloomy Peter-Paul Fortress. The author gives expression in it to his admiration and respect for Paul, for his civilized visage, not at all dictatorial, as he discovers with astonishment. Throughout he informs that in the presence of such a tsar he „sincerely bends his knee”.” 287). Niemcewicz praises Paul not only on his own behalf, but for the release of Kosciuszko „the friend and comrade of Washington” as well as for the thousands of other Polish prisoners-of-war.

The text of the Ode to Paul is as follows.

Pawle, cóż słyszę, Europa zdziwiona.

Do Petersburga ludzkość wprowadzona.

(Paul, what do I hear, Europe is amazed:
Humanity has made its way to Petersburg.)
Siedlisko zdrady i prostej pieszczoty
Zmieniłeś prędko na siedlisko cnoty.
(The seat of treachery and overindulgence
Has suddenly been transformed to the seat of virtue.)
Ołtarz, ksiądz, kościół święte dziś nazwiska.
Zuchwały żołnierz ludu nie uciska.
(Altar, priest, church are now blessed names.
Insolent soldiers no longer oppress the people.)
Bogate hafty w mundury przemienił
I ceni męstwo, który złoto cenił.
(He's changed ornate embroidery into uniforms
And he values manliness, who had valued gold.)
Prawda i przyjaźń obok tronu stoi.
Chytry minister poszlaki się boi.
(Truth and friendship stand beside the throne,
The signs of which the scheming minister fears.)
Sędzia przekupny drży przed winowajcą.
Zdrajca żałuje, że był kiedy zdrajcą.
(Corrupt judges tremble before the guilty.
The traitor regrets his former treachery.)
Lud wykrzykuje, chociaż dostał pana.
Przed godną głową nie żał zgiąć kolana.
(The people shout out that though they have a master
Before a worthy crowned head they'll bow on bended knee.)
Dworak i wieśniak na pokoje idzie.
Ów smutny szczęściem, ten wesoły w biedzie.
(Courtier and country dweller go their separate ways.
The one saddened in happiness, the other cheerful in poverty.)
Cieszy się nędzą, a pychą pobladał...
(One enjoys his need, the other blushing from pride...)

Wielki sławnego uczeń Waszyngtona.
Miłośnik ludu, wolności obrona.
(Great disciple of the glorious Washington.
Lover of the people, defender of liberty.)
Gdy z mocarstwami trzema wojnę toczy,

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Za kraj i prawa umierać ochoczy.
 (When waging war against the three powers
 You are willing to die for country and rule of law.)
 Mocą ranami, zdradą zwyciężony,
 Poszedł w niewola, aż w północne strony.
 (Suffering wounds, overcome by treachery,
 You were taken captive, sent to northern lands.)
 Tam przez dwa lata smutną chwilę gonił
 Za to, że wiernie swą ojczyznę bronił.
 (There for two years you whiled away moments of grief
 Simply for faithfully defending your fatherland.)
 Aż też nareszcie Paweł tron osiada.
 Wzór panujących, bo sam sobą włada.
 (Until finally now Paul has assumed the throne.
 A paragon for those he rules, for he rules over himself.)
 Ten nową drogę do sławy wyśledził
 Kiedy w areszcie Kościuszkę odwiedził.
 (He forged a new path to glory
 When he paid visit to the captive Kosciuszko.)

Wielkość prawdziwa sobie nie ubliża
 Owszem, podwyższa, kiedy się uniaża.
 (True greatness does no harm;
 Rather, it rises when it stoops.)
 Wchodząc więc, rzecz, wolność ci przynoszę.
 I zwyciężonego, car, o przyjaźni proszę.
 (Thus, upon entering, he announced, „I bring you liberty,
 And I, the tsar, kindly ask the defeated for his friendship.)
 Mężny i miły daj rękę rycerzu.
 Waleczna w boju, a stała w przymierzu,
 że odtąd będziesz moim przyjacielem...
 (Valorous and kind knight, give me your hand.
 Valiant in battle, stalwart as ally,
 From now on you will be my friend...)
 Dziki Petersburg zrobił się Warszawą.
 Szlachetny Polak po mieście się snuje
 (Barbaric Petersburg has turned into Warsaw,
 The noble Pole moons about the city)

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I w samowładcy pierwszy raz smakuje.
 Widząc lud inny, inne obyczaje...
 (And for the very first time finds an autocrat to his taste.
 Seeing a different people, different ways...)
 Nic podobnego północ nie widziała.
 Zdrobnił Piotr Wielki, Katarzyna mała.
 (The north has never seen such a thing.
 Peter the Great is diminished, Catherine cut down to size.)
 Ucisk z przemocą, berło ich zamiarem.
 Były despoty. Paweł jeden carem.
 (Oppression and force, the aim of their rule.
 They were despots. Paul the one true tsar.) (Czaja 286-87)

The poem can be viewed as a spontaneous outburst of inspired gratitude to Paul, the ruler of Russia, which captures the mood of the moment and the pleasure derived from freedom, the transformation which Paul has engendered by his virtue, his wisdom and his humane justice has allowed the return to life and happiness of the poet after two years in solitary confinement. As a testament to the new order he praises Paul for putting an end to oppression in dramatically stark contrast to Catherine's self-indulgent court. As an expression of heartfelt joy at his release Niemcewicz praises the nobility and magnanimity of the Russian ruler on his own behalf and that of Kosciuszko¹⁶. Yet, the poem is also a tribute to Kosciuszko who is praised as "the student of Washington" and offered the friendship of Paul. Niemcewicz, the "friend of Washington," sees Paul as embodying the latter's noble traits as a friend of liberty and justice; he observes with strong approval that Paul desires the friendship of Kosciuszko who had long been languishing in prison under Catherine, a personal friendship that implies and extends to a friendship between the two nations, giving the promise of lasting good will between erstwhile enemies. Perhaps the highest praise Niemcewicz pays Paul is recognition of the ruler's transformation of "barbaric Petersburg" into Warsaw, which he now sees as an enlightened capital with a ruler capable of providing his own people as well as others with liberty and justice.

¹⁶ Do Pawła, Petersburg 1796, two separate dates, one 1796, the other 26 Jan 1997 when Niemcewicz and Kosciuszko were in Stockholm. See Paweł Hertz, ed. *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX w.*, ks. 1, Warszawa 1959.

Years later, Niemcewicz wrote insightfully, yet dispassionately and with restraint of Paul in his memoirs¹⁷. Nevertheless, he reserved a special place in his memory for the Russian Tsar that surfaces from time to time in his writings. He displayed his gratitude to Paul as personal liberator in a passage from his American diary. In Brunswick, New Jersey, on October 20, 1797, less than a year after his release from prison, he had been visiting with Kosciuszko's old Revolutionary War comrade, General Anthony White, when he makes the following comment: "In our first visit to Brunswick in the summer a female humming bird was caught...It had been put in a cage with many flowers and with sugar dissolved in water for nourishment. It had touched nothing, appeared inconsolable over the loss of its liberty. It sought incessantly to escape, flying about with a hum that made the air quiver. The next day I opened the doors of her prison and was in respect to this bird as Paul I was towards me; I too was a poor humming-bird who had done no wrong but to love independence".(24).

Significantly, however, he made no mention of the poem *per se*. As a public figure and in his continued efforts on behalf of Polish independence during the periods of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1814) and the Congress Kingdom (1815–1831), he may have been protective of his private sentiments regarding the poem since the ode was never published in his lifetime, nor is it mentioned in his *Notes* nor in his *American Diaries* nor his memoirs. Paul, an intrinsic link in the tradition of autocracy that he had inherited from Peter and Catherine, and had passed on to his sons and grandsons in the 19th century, was nevertheless regarded by Niemcewicz as a "true tsar" who aimed to serve his people and rule with justice and knightly honor.

Niemcewicz remained grateful to Paul throughout his life for the gift of freedom. This is made evident by the fact that two of the portraits that graced the walls of his home in Ursynów in the 1820s located in the outskirts of Warsaw were those of General Washington and Paul I. Rusinowa gives this brief description of the interior of Ursynów: "W jadalni miał stół na szesnaście osób, stołki czarne obite skórą, ściany malowane słomianym

¹⁷ Popędliwym był Paweł, lecz nie był złym, był owszem miłośnikiem sprawiedliwości, hojnym i szlachetnym. Przekonany z dzieciństwa, iż ludy są własnością panujących, że im ślepo posłusznymi być powinni, najmniejsze sprzeciwienie się było w oczach jego niedarowanym występkiem. Nie było zastanowienia się w łaskach, ni w gniewie". („Paul was headstrong, but he was not evil; he was of course a lover of justice, generous and noble. He was convinced since childhood that the people are the property of the ruling class, that they ought to be obedient to them. There was no deliberation in his kindnesses nor in his anger". PCM, 2, 195).

kolorem. Z salonu na lewo przechodziło się do sypialni, w której ściany wyklejono tapetą w złote kratki. Na ścianach wisiała mapa Europy, portret cara Pawła, portret księcia Czartoryskiego, litografia Waszyngtona”. (“In the dining room is a table that sits sixteen, smaller black tables covered with leather, walls painted in a color of straw. From the salon to the left leads to the bedroom in which the walls were covered with tapestries encased in gold frames. On the walls hung a map of Europe, a portrait of Paul, a portrait of Prince Czartoryski, a lithograph of Washington”. *Dziennik*, 1822–1831,14)

In his own words Niemcewicz provides a somewhat different arrangement of his bedroom in Ursynów from 6 May 1829: “W sypialnym pokoju umieściłem mały obrazek Najświętszej Panny z Rafaela, portret dobrego króla saskiego Fryderyka Augusta, który w ciężkich czasach tak nam mądrze i łaskawie panował, portret dobroczyńcy mojego księcia Adama Kazimierza Czartoryskiego i portret imperatora Pawła oswobodziciela mego z ciężkiej moskiewskiej niewoli. Nadto widok spadu Niagary” (“In the bedroom I placed a small painting of the Blessed Virgin by Raphael, a portrait of the good Saxon King Frederick August, who in difficult times ruled us so wisely and mercifully, a portrait of my benefactor Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski and a portrait of the Emperor Paul, my liberator from the difficult Russian captivity. Also, a view of Niagara Falls”. 240) Only Czartoryski the elder and Paul are mentioned in both descriptions.

Niemcewicz, his uncommon satirical gifts notwithstanding, and Kosciuszko were able to humanize their enemies and be humanized in turn. Even Paul recognized Kosciuszko as a hero of a noble cause. It is worthy of note to recall that Paul’s son, Alexander I, had been present at the liberation of Kosciuszko and witnessed their extended exchange. In the months after the defeat of Napoleon, Alexander was the only supporter of the Polish cause among the Holy Alliance and advocated the creation of the Congress Kingdom. The hopes for Poland generated by Alexander were taken up by Kosciuszko. Kosciuszko had retained his great moral authority among his countrymen as a man who refused to collaborate with a condescending and dictatorial Napoleon.

Kosciuszko also attempted to cooperate with Alexander, once again on his own terms, most characteristically by championing the rights of the peasants. His expressed desire was to set up schools for peasants at government expense, to introduce land reform allowing peasants to obtain full liberty of person and land ownership. Upon Alexander’s assent, Kosciusz-

ko had expressed his willingness to take an oath of loyalty and attend his coronation as King of Poland. (Walicki, 119-120) Kosciuszko had been particularly interested in the fate of Lithuania as indicated in a letter of June 1815 to Alex, but received no reply. He remained bitterly disappointed by the tsar's failure to extend the boundaries to the Dvina and Dnieper (Letter to Jefferson, April 2, 1816). As an émigré he protested against the political status quo of his homeland and throughout his life he defined his republican concept of Poland through liberty, integrity and independence, an embodiment in life as in death of the national will to existence.

Though Alexander was unresponsive to Kosciuszko's fervent hopes for his fatherland, he did accede to the collective desire of seeing their hero's remains returned to his native land. Jan Pawel Woronicz, poet and bishop of Krakow, declared at a speech he gave at the funeral ceremonies held at the Wawel Cathedral marking the return of Kosciuszko's remains from Switzerland to the ancient Polish capital as a "cudowne zdarzenie" "a miraculous event". (Oleksowicz 160) This proved to be yet one more remarkable act of magnanimity on the part of a Russian leader toward its traditional enemy. Remaining true to himself and his principles, Kosciuszko was thus reduced and elevated to a symbolic role in the hearts and minds of his fellow Poles.

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PRISONS, POLITICS AND THE GIFT OF FREEDOM: KOSCIUSZKO, NIEMCEWICZ AND PAUL I

This study concerns the character and principles of Paul I (1754–1801), his attitude toward Poland and in particular his relationship with Julian U. Niemcewicz (1758–1841) and Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746–1817) in the aftermath of Paul’s generous act of liberating the Poles from imprisonment in Petersburg and their subsequent American exile. It focuses on the “gift” of liberation itself and the complicating factors of Paul’s decision to impose an oath of loyalty (*przysięga wiernopoddańcza*) on all released prisoners, including Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz, an act tantamount to recognizing the end of Poland, and their unwilling status as Russian subjects. Kosciuszko’s reluctant signing of the document in the light of his stature as national leader and previous oaths taken to serve the Polish fatherland is examined to cast light on his subsequent relations with both Paul.

This paper draws upon a number of scholarly works devoted to Paul and Kosciuszko as well as writings of Niemcewicz, his memoirs and travel journals, and the account of his confinement in the Petropavlovsk Prison, *Notes sur ma captivité en Russie* (1800). In particular, his ode “Do Pawła” (“To Paul”) written in Petersburg upon his release by Paul is examined as an expression of gratitude to the Russian tsar for the gift of freedom. The

poem captures the mood of the moment of his return to a life of freedom, but is also a testament to his admiration for the Russian tsar and to Kosciuszko himself as a selfless and far-sighted leader of the Polish nation.

Key words: Kosciuszko, Niemcewicz, Paul I, prison writings, gift, loyalty oath, honor

WIĘZIENIA, POLITYCY I DAR WOLNOŚCI: KOSCIUSZKO, NIEMCEWICZ I PAWEŁ I

Artykuł koncentruje się wokół osoby cara Pawła I Romanowa (1754–1801), a dotyczy przede wszystkim jego stosunku do Polski i Polaków, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza (1758–1841) i Tadeusza Kościuszki (1746–1817). Omawiane są okoliczności carskiej amnestii, która objęła Polaków więzionych w Petersburgu po insurekcji kościuszkowskiej. Uwaga badawcza skupia się na niuansach związanych z owym „darem” wolności, za który trzeba było zapłacić przysięgą wierноподданczą, a w konsekwencji uznać fakt rozbiorów. Niechęć Kościuszki wobec tego przymusu była tym większa, że wcześniej składał przysięgę dozgonnej lojalności wobec Rzeczypospolitej, przyrzekając bronić jej za wszelką cenę.

Badacz w swych analizach i refleksjach opiera się na źródłach i literaturze przedmiotu poświęconej Pawłowi I oraz Kościuszce, odwołuje się też do dzieł Niemcewicza, jego pamiętników i dzienników (przede wszystkim do *Notes sur ma captivité en Russie*, 1800). W artykule omówiona zostaje oda *Do Pawła*, napisana przez poetę z Ursynowa tuż po uwolnieniu go z więzienia w Petersburgu, a która rozpatrywana jest tu przede wszystkim jako świadectwo wdzięczności za łaskę cara. Jest też – jak przekonuje autor – wyrazem wdzięczności i uwielbienia dla Kościuszki jako troskliwego i mądrego przywódcy narodu polskiego.

Słowa-klucze: Kościuszko, Niemcewicz, car Paweł I, zapiski więzienne, dar, lojalność, przysięga, honor