



Brugge

College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

International Conference at Natolin
organized by the Chair of European Civilization

22-23 September 2016

**THE FATE OF FREEDOM IN EASTERN EUROPE:
AUTOCRACY – OLIGARCHY – ANARCHY?**



*The Coat of Arms of the January Rising (1863-1864) inspired by the Commonwealth of Three Nations
agreed by the Union of Hadiach*

The aim of the conference is to ask whether the region between the Baltic and Black Seas, provisionally described as 'Eastern Europe', is historically fated to experience the failure of systems of government founded on liberty; whether the only stable state structures involve autocratic or oligarchic rule; whether dreams of freedom lead either to anarchy or dictatorship. This fate seems to be expressed by narratives about post-Soviet republics, especially in the context of the last Ukrainian revolutions. Many accept such narratives, but others contest them, defending these countries' right to self-determination. This conference will consider the sources and appeal of such narratives. Are these nations are incapable or capable of maintaining forms of statehood based on liberty?

Because such narratives are popular in Russia, it would appear that one of the main reasons for this is the strength of the tradition and ideology of autocratic rule in Russia (that is, the heir of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy claiming supremacy over 'all Rus'). So one aim of the conference is to look at periods in the history of Rus and Russia, which it seemed that liberty had a chance of bedding down. These include the medieval city republic of Novgorod the Great and 1917.

The titular problem is also linked to the view, rooted in Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian historiographies, that the libertarian constitution of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, formed in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Polish Crown, could not be grafted into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or Ukraine (on the banks of the Dnipro). According to this view, the only viable alternatives to 'magnate oligarchy' were Cossack 'licence' and Muscovite autocracy. But many historians have seen civic potential in the multi-confessional east of the Commonwealth. The question arises of the extent to which civic culture could attract non-nobles: burghers, Jews and Cossacks.

The domination and dismemberment of the Commonwealth in the eighteenth century stimulated demand for narratives about its downfall. The Polish nobles' unbounded freedom supposedly mutated into anarchy – at the expense of the rural and urban population. On the one hand a myth arose of the 'Polish borderlands' (*kresy*) as the cradle of liberty. On the other hand, Tsarist and later Bolshevik Russian authorities were keen to adopt the role of the defender of Lithuanian and Ruthenian masses, oppressed by '*panskaia Polsha*'. Many Polish opinion-formers condemned 'the nobles' anarchy' and justified absolute monarchy. Again, 'optimists' responded; they now constitute a clear majority of Polish and 'Western' historians of the Commonwealth. However, most Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian historians have a different perspective on the Commonwealth and its legacy, as do many specialists in Jewish history.

Considering the building of a stable, democratic and libertarian form of government in Ukraine today, the question arises of which traditions and myths would be more helpful: those of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, or rather the self-help experience acquired in Galicia. The specificities of the paths taken in Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania should be compared with each other.

Last but not least, the problem addressed by the conference fits current, but very old dilemmas in Euro-Atlantic political thought, since Aristotle. How can the degeneration of monarchy into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy and democracy (or *politeia*) into anarchy be prevented? How can the balance of a mixed form of government be maintained? How can a republican form of government which arose in an ancient Greek *polis* be adapted to extensive states, such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth? Today we may ask: how should we look after the quality of democracy in the light of these dilemmas?

Programme

Thursday 22 September

9.00 Registration

9.30 Opening session

Welcome by the Vice-Rector of the College of Europe at Natolin– Ewa Ośniecka-Tamecka (in Polish)

Introduction – Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski (in English)

Keynote lecture –Robert Frost

Liberty and Self-Government. The Polish-Lithuanian Union and the Embodiment of the Renaissance Commonwealth

Discussion

11.15 *Coffee/tea*

11.45 Panel discussion 1: Liberty and Oligarchy

Chairman: Paweł Kowal

Andrzej Rachuba

Magnateria litewska w XVI-XVIII w. a demokracja i wolność szlachecka [The sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Lithuanian magnates and noble democracy and liberty]

Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski

From 'Repellent Oligarchy' to 'Orderly Freedom'? The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the Eve of its Destruction

Kateryna Pryshchepa

The Power of Reaction: Ukrainian Oligarchy and the Taming of Ukrainian Revolutions

Discussant: Artūras Vasiliauskas

13.30 *Lunch*

14.30 Panel discussion 2: Liberty and Citizenship

Chairman: Jan Kubik

Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz

Wolność szlachcica – wolność obywatela – wolność człowieka: czym była, a czym nie była „królowa wolność”? [Freedom for nobles, citizens or human beings: what was, and what was not ‘Queen Liberty’?]

Urszula Augustyniak

Wolność jednostki a dobro wspólnoty [The freedom of the individual and the good of the community]

Radosław Żurawski vel Grajewski

Wolność polska a wolność brytyjska: z problematyki wzajemnych stereotypów [Polish freedom and British freedom: a problem of mutual stereotypes]

Izabella Chruślińska

Revolucja Godności jako przejaw aspiracji społeczeństwa do samodecyzdowania oraz zaczyn ruchu obywatelskiego na Ukrainie [The revolution of dignity as an expression of the aspirations of society to self-determination and the leaven of the civic movement in Ukraine]

16.30 Coffee/tea

17.00 Panel discussion 3: Liberty and Diversity – Whose Liberty?

Chairman: Antony Polonsky

Rimvydas Petrauskas

Wolność szlachecka – wolność chłopska: idea wolności w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w późnym średniowieczu [Noble freedom – peasant freedom: the idea of liberty in the late medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania]

Adam Kaźmierczyk

Czy rzeczywiście niezależni? Samorząd terytorialny Żydów a ustrój Rzeczypospolitej [Truly autonomous? Jews’ territorial self-government and the constitution of the Commonwealth]

Andrzej Puksztó

Patriotyzmy, które dzielą. Mniejszość narodowa między Ojczyzną a Macierzą (perspektywa środkowoeuropejska) [Patriotisms which divide: national minorities between the Fatherland and the Mother country (a Central European perspective)]

19.00 Group photograph and dinner

Friday 23 September

9.00 Panel discussion 4: Liberty and Autocracy

Chairwoman: Zofia Zielińska

Andrzej Nowak

Mistrz Wincenty, Stanisław ze Skarbimierza i Stanisław Zaborowski: trzy wieki refleksji o wolności i autokracji [Master Wincenty, Stanisław of Skarbimierz and Stanisław Zaborowski: three centuries of reflection on liberty and autocracy]

Hieronim Grala

Państwo Moskiewskie - między samodzielną rzeczywistością i demokratyczną iluzją
[The Muscovite state: between autocratic reality and democratic illusion]

Marek Kornat

Międzywojenna Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia między demokracją a autokracją
[Interwar East-Central Europe between democracy and autocracy]

Aliaksandr Milinkevich

Unia Europejska i Białorus: sankcje czy dialog? [The EU and Belarus: sanctions or dialogue?]

Discussant: Andrej Januškevič

11.00 *Coffee/tea*

11.30 Panel discussion 5: Liberty, Anarchy and Sovereignty

Chairman: Wojciech Kriegseisen

Frank Sysyn

The Formation of the Ukrainian Fatherland and Cossack Liberty: Between Rejection and Acceptance of the Commonwealth

Zofia Zielińska

Geneza i etapy umacniania rosyjskiej hegemonii w Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII w. [The origins of Russian hegemony in the Commonwealth in the eighteenth century and the stages by which it was reinforced]

Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė

Od samowoli do samorządu: realizacja reform samorządowych i administracyjnych w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w drugiej połowie XVIII w. [From licence to self-government: the implementation of local-government reforms in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the eighteenth century]

Jarosław Czubyty

Księstwo Warszawskie: wolność, anarchia i suwerenność pod napoleońskim protektoratem
[The Duchy of Warsaw: freedom, anarchy and sovereignty under a Napoleonic protectorate]

13.30 Lunch

14.30 Panel discussion 6: Liberty and Democracy

Chairman: Andrzej Paczkowski

Marek Cichocki

Ile wolności znieśdemokracja i ile demokracji może znieść wolność? Od dylematów I Rzeczypospolitej do obecnego kryzysu liberalnej demokracji [How much liberty can democracy bear, and how much democracy can liberty bear? From the dilemmas of the Commonwealth to the current crisis of liberal democracy]

Katarzyna Błachowska

Republika niechciana, republika zapomniana. Nowogród Wielki w rosyjskiej i polskiej tradycji historiograficznej XIX–XX w. [An unwanted republic, a forgotten republic: Novgorod the Great in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian and Polish historiographical traditions]

Johannes Remy

Ukraine, Russia and the Possibility of Democracy in 1917

Bohdan Cywiński

Płyniemy przez ciągły sztorm... Idea demokracji a historyczne realia trwania narodów Europy Wschodniej [We sail through a ceaseless storm... The idea of democracy and the historical realities of the endurance of the nations of Eastern Europe]

16.30 Coffee/tea

17.00 Round table:

Chairman: Andrzej Nowak

Panellists: Jan Kubik, Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, Olaf Osica, Geoffrey Hosking, Antony Polonsky, Paweł Kowal, Andrew Wilson, Myroslav Marynovych

18.30 Closure of the conference

Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski

19.00 Dinner