

CHALLENGES FOR THE COMMONWEALTH: THE COUNSEL OF JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

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Abstract. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne et sur sa réformation projetée* was written in 1771 at the request of the confederates of Bar and published for the first time in 1782. It was published in a Polish translation by Maurycy Franciszek Karp in 1789. By far the best analysis of the sources and arguments of the *Considérations* remains Jerzy Michalski's *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, published in 1977, which has until now made no significant impact on worldwide Rousseau studies. Michalski showed the extent and limits of the consanguinity between Rousseau's doctrine and Polish-Lithuanian republicanism. The present article argues that Rousseau threw down a fundamental challenge to his readers: did Poles want to be themselves or did they want to be modern Europeans? He counselled a reconception of the Polish—and by extension any—nation on the basis of a fundamental rejection of enlightened and cosmopolitan modernity.

Key words: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Enlightenment, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polish-Lithuanian republicanism, Maurycy Franciszek Karp

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is usually considered one of the most prominent thinkers and writers of the Enlightenment—as the author of its most famous political treatise, *Du Contrat Social*, its most influential educational work, *Émile*, and its best-selling novel, the *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Yet if one tries to find a set of criteria with which to define the Enlightenment, one usually finds Rousseau in loud and lonely opposition to them. Progress, for example. His contradiction of the belief in the contributions of the sciences and arts to human progress, expressed in his first *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* in 1750, first brought him fame, or perhaps notoriety, and sparked a wave of polemics. Scarcely less controversy was provoked by Rousseau's contrast of the blissful state of nature with the ever worsening injustices of modern civilization in his second *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*.¹

¹ The scholarly literature on Rousseau is too vast even for a sample to be given here, but Rousseau's importance to the Enlightenment is treated as a given, for example by John C. O'Neal, 'Rousseau, Jean-Jacques', in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors, 4 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; online version 2005 (<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195104301.001.0001/acref-9780195104301-e-627>, accessed 11 February 2016).

Still more at odds with most of the principal thrusts of the Enlightenment was Rousseau's last major political work, the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne et sur sa réformation projetée*.² This work was written in 1771 at the request of the confederates of Bar, represented by its agent in France, Michał Wielhorski, the master of the kitchen (*kuchmistrz*) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.³ The invitation from the confederates of Bar gave Rousseau a second opportunity to play the part of legislator for an insurgent nation—a few years earlier he had composed a *Projet de Constitution pour la Corse*, which was then in revolt against Genoa, before its annexation by France in 1768. The confederates of Bar had first approached the Abbé Gabriel Bonnot de Mably; evidently they found his “Observations sur la réforme des loix de Pologne” less than wholly satisfactory, since they not only asked Rousseau for his thoughts and provided him with a good deal of information about the Commonwealth, but also gave him access to Mably's treatise and his exchanges of views with Wielhorski.⁴ Copies of Rousseau's manuscript soon started to circulate, but the work was not published for the first time until 1782, when it appeared in a posthumous

² I shall be referring throughout to the standard, critical edition by Jean Fabre in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 3, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, text on pp. 951–1041, notes on pp. 1733–1804, introduction on pp. ccxvi–ccxlv (cited henceforth as *OC*). This edition features unmodernized spelling and punctuation, retained here in the quotations. The standard English translation can be found in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought series: *Rousseau. The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, in which the pagination of the *OC* is indicated by square brackets.

³ It is worth noting at this point that Rousseau consequentially referred throughout his text to “la Pologne” and “les Polonois,” only occasionally to “la République,” but never to “la République des Deux Nations” or to modern renderings such as “la République Polono-Lithuanienne.” He was well aware of the distinction between the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; indeed, he advised making further divisions in order to decentralize decision-making. This did not prevent his work, as other authors in this volume have shown, from gaining enthusiasts among the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

⁴ Jerzy Michalski, *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, Warsaw: Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk and Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977, pp. 7–18.

edition of Rousseau's works.⁵ Others followed. In 1789 a Polish translation was published by Maurycy Franciszek Karp of Rykiów (Rėkyva) in Samogitia (Žemaitija) in 1789.⁶

International Rousseau scholars continue to experience chronic problems with interpreting the *Considérations* within Rousseau's *œuvre* because of the difficulty in understanding of the political, social, cultural, and constitutional context of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This situation would be still worse but for the standard critical edition of the *Considérations* published in the third volume of Rousseau's *Œuvres Complètes* in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series in 1964. This edition was provided with extensive notes and a substantial introduction by the French literary historian Jean Fabre (1904–1975).⁷

Fabre, the author of a major work on King Stanisław August Poniatowski, largely researched during a decade spent in Poland before the Second World War,⁸ displayed impressive erudition in his commentaries. However, he remained unaware of the actual texts supplied to Rousseau by Wielhorski, and as a result could only speculate (sometimes accurately) about the information available to Rousseau. It was Jerzy Michalski (1924–2007) who discovered these papers in the Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych in Warsaw, and who then wrote a succinct, brilliant book, *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, published in 1977.⁹ Eighteen years later, he published an analogous, but much longer monograph on Mably's exchanges with Wielhorski and the "Sarmatian" republican tradition more generally.¹⁰

Michalski conducted a thorough analysis of what Rousseau was told, and what he wrote, both in the *Considérations* and elsewhere in his *œuvre*. Displaying a formidable grasp not only of the *Contrat Social*, but also the *Discours sur les origines et fondements de l'inégalité*, *Discours sur l'économie politique*, *Lettres écrites de la Montagne* and *Projet de*

⁵ *Collection complète des œuvres de J. J. Rousseau citoyen de Genève*, ed. Pierre-Alexandre Du Peyrou and Paul Moulton, vol. 1, Geneva: Société typographique de Genève, 1782, pp. 417–539. This was the basis for the first scholarly edition in *The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. C[harles] E[dwyn] Vaughan, Cambridge: University Press, 1915, vol. 2, pp. 434–516.

⁶ *Uwagi nad rządem Polskim oraz nad odmianą, czyli reformą onego projektowaną przez J. Jakuba Russo obywatela genewskiego z francuzkiego na oyczysty język przełożone miesiąca grudnia dnia 20. R. 1788*, trans. Maurycy Franciszek Karp, Warsaw: Michał Gröll, 1789.

⁷ See note 2 above.

⁸ Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des lumières. Étude de cosmopolitisme*, Paris: Institut des Études Slaves, 1952.

⁹ See note 4 above.

¹⁰ Jerzy Michalski, *Sarmacki republikanizm w oczach Francuza. Mably i konfederaci barscy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Monografie Fundacji na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 1995.

constitution pour la Corse, he demonstrated that to a very great extent Rousseau's own political doctrine and Polish-Lithuanian republicanism were compatible, largely because of their shared sources in classical republicanism. This conclusion applied in particular to Rousseau's concept of the general will, which was paralleled in the justifications of the *liberum veto*. Michalski showed, *inter alia*, how it was not difficult for Rousseau to acknowledge the claims made by the defenders of the *veto*, including Wielhorski, that one virtuous citizen could truly articulate the general will against a corrupted majority.¹¹

Drawing on his intimate knowledge of the international situation at the time, as well as the internal evidence of the text, Michalski was able to downplay the immediate significance of Rousseau's aside that the Poles' neighbours might be about to perform the service of diminishing their territory, as well as his famous counsel that if the Poles were unable to prevent themselves from being swallowed by their neighbours, they should at least ensure that they would not be digested.¹² Rousseau, argued Michalski, assumed an Ottoman and confederate victory, which would bring the Commonwealth a twenty-year respite, during which his advice might be implemented. While Rousseau did not rule out Russia "swallowing" Poland in the longer term, there is no reason to suppose that he predicted the partition that occurred in 1772.¹³

Unfortunately, Michalski's monograph remains unknown to international scholarship on Rousseau. A case in point is the recent "critical" edition of the *Considérations* from the Slatkine publishing house. Michalski's book is listed in the bibliography. However, in the very first footnote to the text the editor states that according to Fabre, the texts provided by Wielhorski to Rousseau remain unknown.¹⁴ While the editor might be excused for not reading Michalski's book in Polish, the briefest glance at the five-page *résumé* in French would have informed him sufficiently about Wielhorski's information and its whereabouts. *In flagrante delicto...* As a result, it continues to be possible to find ingenious interpretations of the *Considérations*, dependent on this or that theoretical paradigm, which have virtually no understanding either of the information available to Rousseau about the Commonwealth, or

¹¹ Michalski, *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, pp. 78–91.

¹² *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 971, 959–960.

¹³ Michalski, *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, pp. 16–18.

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, ed. Michel Marty, Geneva: Slatkine, 2012, p. 3, n. 1.

of his Polish-Lithuanian audience.¹⁵ It is to be hoped, however, that the results of Michalski's research will soon be brought to a worldwide scholarly audience by two developments. The first is the translation into English of *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, which has just been published electronically with full open access.¹⁶ The other is a new critical edition of the *Considérations*, prepared by Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz and Dominique Triaire, to be published shortly. This edition will draw attention to each and every aspect of Rousseau's dialogue with Wielhorski as reflected in the text.

Michalski was much less concerned with Rousseau's influence in the Commonwealth during the last decades of its existence, or on the Polish cause in the nineteenth century—a subject which interested Fabre.¹⁷ Regarding the eighteenth century, Walerian Kalinka and Władysław Konopczyński concurred that Rousseau's eloquence had harmed the cause of reform. Their criticism has been echoed more recently by Jerzy Lukowski.¹⁸ Besides Wielhorski himself, one of the first readers of the *Considérations* was King Stanisław August Poniatowski, who was sent a copy of the manuscript by Friedrich Melchior Grimm (the eighteenth century's most successful purveyor of literary gossip to princes via his *Correspondance Littéraire*). Stanisław August declined to agree with Grimm that the work was nonsensical. Instead he pronounced it “le plus beau Roman politique qui ait encore paru,” appreciating its rare force and eloquence. Opining that had Rousseau had different sources of information, “il eut écrit tout différemment,” he observed laconically that Rousseau's plan differed greatly from reforming the Commonwealth's government according

¹⁵ Two cases in point are: Jeffrey A. Smith, ‘Nationalism, Virtue and the Spirit of Liberty in Rousseau's *Government of Poland*’, *Review of Politics*, 65, 2003, 3, pp. 409–437; and Denise Schaeffer, ‘Realism, Rhetoric and the Possibility of Reform in Rousseau's *Considerations on the Government of Poland*’, *Polity*, 42, 2010, 3, pp. 377–397. Among American political scientists, far more influential than Fabre has been Willmore Kendall's ‘Introduction: How to Read Rousseau's *Government of Poland*’, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Government of Poland*, trans. Willmore Kendall, Indianapolis, IN, and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972, pp. ix–xxxix.

¹⁶ Jerzy Michalski, *Rousseau and Polish Republicanism*, trans. Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, Warsaw: Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2015, <http://rcin.org.pl/publication/78371>, accessed 21 March 2016).

¹⁷ See Jean Fabre, *Lumières et Romantisme. Énergie et nostalgie, de Rousseau à Mickiewicz*, Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1963.

¹⁸ Walerian Kalinka, *Sejm Czteroletni [1880–1887]*, 4th [sic – 5th] edn, Warsaw: Volumen, 1991, vol. 2, pp. 299–313; Władysław Konopczyński, ‘Jan Jakób Rousseau doradcą Polaków’, *Themis Polska*, seria II, vol. 1, part 2, 1913, pp. 1–28; idem, *Polscy pisarze polityczni*, 2nd edn, Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2012, pp. 516–520; Jerzy Lukowski, *Disorderly Liberty: The Political Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Continuum, 2010, pp. 123–144, 176–179.

to the model of the British constitution.¹⁹ The king's point was well made. Rousseau had visited England six years earlier. In the *Considérations* he was scathing about the English, whose vaunted freedom was—he believed—illusory.²⁰

The *Considérations* became more widely known and appreciated in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth following the publication of Karp's translation in 1789 (at the instance and expense of another fervent disciple of Rousseau, Wojciech Turski). The Four Years' Diet (*Sejm*) of 1788–1792 probably saw the zenith of Polish-Lithuanian enthusiasm for Rousseau. Karp served as an envoy for Samogitia in the second complement elected in 1790, and sang his hero's praises. His fellow-envoy Konstanty Jelski (elected by the Lithuanian dietine-in-exile of Starodub) approvingly quoted Rousseau's opinion that the dietines were the Commonwealth's true "*palladium libertatis*" during the debates on the Law on Dietines in March 1791.²¹ On the one hand, Rousseau's insistence on imperative mandates from the dietines for envoys to the diet was—for the moment—preserved. On the other, his advice not to deprive landless nobles of the right of active participation in dietines was rejected. Ignacy Potocki's *Projekt do formy rządu* (Project for the Form of Government) of 1790 featured a subordination of the diet to the dietines, but mandatory instructions were finally rejected in the Constitution of 3 May 1791. The *Ustawa Rządowa* (Law on Government) moved the Commonwealth a long way towards a typically Montesquieuvian balance between legislative, executive, and judicial powers. However, the keystone of the Constitution, Article V, declared firmly that all power derived from the will of the nation—a typically Rousseauvian note which also accorded with an essential tenet of Polish-Lithuanian republicanism.²² Besides the *Considérations*, other works by Rousseau, especially the

¹⁹ See Jean Fabre, *Stanislas-Auguste et les hommes de lettres français*, Kraków, 1936 [offprint from *Archivum Neophilologicum*, 2, 1936], pp. 25–28; cf. idem, *Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des lumières*, pp. 343–346. Jochen Schlobach, 'Lumières en France, princes éclairés et le roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski', *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 12, 1995, pp. 93–107, at p. 100, shows how Fabre hardened his criticism of Grimm following the Second World War. See also Richard Butterwick, 'Stanisław August Poniatowski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and *politesse* in England', *SVEC* 2003:7, pp. 249–270, at pp. 254–261.

²⁰ *OC*, vol. iii, pp. 960, 966, 978, 979, 982, 992, 994, 1000, 1008. Michalski, *Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, pp. 33–34.

²¹ *Dyaryusz seymu ordynarynego pod związkim Konfederacyi Generalney Obojga Narodów w podwoynym składzie zgromadzonego w Warszawie od dnia 16 grudnia roku 1790*, Warsaw: Michał Gröll, 1791, vol. 1, part 1, p. 282.

²² See Jerzy Lukowski, 'Recasting Utopia: Montesquieu, Rousseau and the Polish Constitution of 3 May 1791', *Historical Journal*, 37, 1994, 1, pp. 65–87.

Contrat Social, *Émile*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and the autobiographical *Confessions* were widely read and often cited at this time.²³

For all the similarities in rhetoric, however, Rousseau's detailed prescriptions for the Commonwealth were in most respects quite different to the vision entertained by the Polish-Lithuanian reformers—even those of a decidedly anti-monarchical, republican bent. Most scholars, whatever their level of knowledge of the Commonwealth, have hitherto focused on questions such as the extent to which Rousseau departed from his own doctrine in proposing this or that institutional solution, the amount of power and influence he left to the king, the extent to which he connived with regard to the enserfed status of the peasantry—in short on the radicalism or conservatism of his prescriptions. Here I would like to focus instead on the fundamental challenge thrown down by Rousseau to his readers in the Commonwealth.

Did Poles want to be themselves or did they want to be modern Europeans? From this question followed two further ones, to which he offered answers. The first question was: what steps should the Poles take if they wished to succeed as modern Europeans? The second was: what should they do if they wanted to remain themselves—Poles—or, perhaps, to reclaim themselves as a nation? Expecting and hoping that they would prefer to be Poles, he first needed to know: what had made Poles themselves?

Rousseau explicitly offered this alternative at the start of the eleventh chapter, on the economic system. “Si vous ne voulez que devenir bruyans, brillans, redoutables, et influer sur les autres peuples de l’Europe, vous avez leur exemple, appliquez-vous à l’imiter. Cultivez les sciences, les arts, le commerce, l’industrie, ayez des troupes réglées, des places fortes, des Académies, surtout un bon système de finances qui fasse bien circuler l’argent.” If the Poles did this, he claimed, with more than a hint of irony, “on vous comptera parmi les grandes puissances de l’Europe, vous entrez dans tous les systèmes politiques, dans toutes les négociations on recherchera votre alliance, on vous liera par des traités: il n’y aura pas une guerre en Europe où vous n’ayez l’honneur d’être fourrés: si le Bonheur vous en veut, vous pourrez rentrer dans vos anciennes possessions, peut-être en conquérir de nouvelles.” But

²³ As Kalinka (*Sejm Czteroletni*, vol. 2, p. 300) noted; Konopczyński's criticism (*Polscy pisarze polityczni*, p. 516) that Kalinka had exaggerated is unjustified. See also Marian Szyjkowski, *Myśl Jana Jakóba Rousseau w Polsce XVIII wieku*, Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1913. On one of the *grandes dames* most influenced by Rousseau, see Alina Aleksandrowicz, *Izabela Czartoryska. Polskość i europejskość*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie, 1998; and Agnieszka Whelan, *Gesture and Performance: Princess Izabela Czartoryska and Her Gardens, 1770–1831*, doctoral thesis, University College London, 2013.

they would by the same token become “un peuple intrigant, ardent, avide, ambitieux, servile et fripon comme les autres,” forever at one of the two extremes of licence and slavery.²⁴

He then offered the alternative: “Mais si par hasard vous aimiez mieux former une nation libre, paisible et sage qui n’a ni peur ni besoin de personne, qui se suffit à elle-même et qui est heureuse; alors il faut prendre une méthode toute différente, maintenir, rétablir chez vous des moeurs simples, des goûts sains, un esprit martial sans ambition; former des ames courageuses et désintéressées; appliquer vos peuples à l’agriculture et aux arts nécessaires à la vie, rendre l’argent méprisable, et s’il peut inutile, chercher, trouver, pour opérer de grandes choses, des ressorts plus puissans et plus surs.” They would not be much talked about, but they would live “dans la véritable abondance, dans la justice, et dans la liberté,” feared and left in peace by their neighbours.²⁵ In the short run, however, he warned against yielding to the weary desire for tranquillity after so much struggle: “Le Repos et la liberté me paroissent incompatibles: il faut opter.”²⁶

Before considering those more powerful and reliable springs of nation-building, we should note the intensity of Rousseau’s aversion to cosmopolitan, modern Europeans. “Il n’y a plus aujourd’hui de François, d’Allemands, d’Espagnols, d’Anglois même, quoiqu’on en dise,” he asserted, “il n’y a que des Européens. Tous ont les mêmes goûts les mêmes passions, les mêmes moeurs, parceque aucun n’a reçu de forme nationale par une institution particulière. Tous dans les mêmes circonstances feront les mêmes choses; tous se diront désintéressés et seront fripons; tous parleront du bien public et ne penseront qu’à eux-mêmes; tous vanteront la médiocrité et voudront être des Cresus; ils n’ont d’ambition que pour le luxe, ils n’ont de passion que celle de l’or. Sûrs d’avoir avec lui tout de ce qui les tente, tous se vendront au premier qui voudra les payer. Que leur importe à quel maître qu’ils obéissent, de quel Etat ils suivent les loix. Pourvu qu’ils trouvent de l’argent à voler et les femmes à corrompre, ils sont partout dans leur pays.”²⁷

This coruscating verdict was founded in Rousseau’s longstanding glorification of the ancients—especially the Spartans and republican Romans—and his equally well established contempt for the effeminate, dissolute, corrupted moderns. However, a significant shift had occurred in his thought. Whereas in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* his criticism of

²⁴ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 1003.

²⁵ *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 1003–1004.

²⁶ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 953.

²⁷ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 960.

modern cosmopolitanism was couched in a lament for lost individual genius,²⁸ in the *Considérations* it served to amplify his admiration of collective and national distinctiveness. For there was one contemporary people, he declared, that differed least from the ancients: “Je vois tous les Etats de l’Europe courir à leur ruine. Monarchies, Républiques, toutes ces nations si magnifiquement instituées; tous ces beaux gouvernemens si sagement pondérés, tombés en décrépitude, menacent d’une mort prochaine; et la Pologne, cette region dépeuplée, dévastée, opprimée, ouverte à ses agresseurs, au fort de ses malheurs et de son anarchie, montre encore tout le feu de la jeunesse.”²⁹

That fire was the love of freedom. It burnt fiercely, according to Rousseau, because Poles had had relatively little contact with other peoples and were relatively unspoilt by modern civilization. It was their national distinctiveness which inclined them towards patriotism or love of the fatherland, “c’est-à-dire des loix et de la liberté.”³⁰ If they wanted to remain free, they should build fortresses in their hearts; they needed “d’infuser, pour ainsi dire, dans toute la nation l’ame des confédérés; c’est d’établir tellement la République dans les coeurs des Polonois, qu’elle y subsiste malgré tous les efforts de ses oppresseurs.” And, if, he continued, “vous faites en sorte qu’un Polonois ne puisse jamais devenir un Russe, je vous répons que la Russie ne subjuguera pas la Pologne.”³¹

Rousseau drew inspiration from the Jews, whom Moses had so burdened with morals and practices, rites, and ceremonies, that they became unassimilable. And so “cette singulière nation, si souvent subjuguée, si souvent dispersée, et détruite en apparence, mais toujours idolatre de sa règle, s’est pourtant conservée jusqu’à nos jours éparsé parmi les autres sans y confondre, et que ses mœurs, ses loix, ses rites, subsistent et dureront autant que le monde, malgré la haine et la persécution du reste du genre humain.”³²

As for the Poles, he was optimistic that “une grande nation qui ne s’est jamais trop mêlée avec ses voisins doit en avoir beaucoup qui lui soient propres, et qui peut-être

²⁸ ‘Il régné dans nos mœurs une vile et trompeuse uniformité, et tous les esprits semblent avoir été jettés dans un même moule: sans cesse la politesse exige, la bienséance ordonne: sans cesse on suit des usages, jamais son propre génie’, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, *OC*, vol. 3, p. 8.

²⁹ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 954.

³⁰ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 966.

³¹ *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 959–960.

³² *OC*, vol. 3, p. 957. This point was emphasized by Michalski (*Rousseau i sarmacki republikanizm*, p. 77) and – less carefully – by Fabre (*OC*, vol. 3, p. 1746). See, more broadly, Jonathan D. Marks, ‘Rousseau’s Use of the Jewish Example’, *Review of Politics*, 72, 2010, 3, pp. 463–481.

s'abâtardissent journellement par la pente générale en Europe de prendre les goûts et les mœurs des François. Il faut maintenir, rétablir ces anciens usages, et en introduire de convenables, qui soient propres aux Polonois.”³³ Theorists of modern nationalism might discern a call here for “the invention of tradition”—if the Poles had forgotten their old customs, counselled Rousseau, they should invent distinctive new ones.³⁴

Religion was barely mentioned in the *Considérations*, but Rousseau did note that ancient lawgivers “chercherent des liens qui attachassent les Citoyens à la patrie et les uns aux autres, et ils les trouvèrent dans des usages particuliers, dans des ceremonies religieuses qui par leur nature étoient toujours exclusives et nationales,” and referred his readers to the end of the *Contrat Social*.³⁵ He could therefore avoid giving gratuitous offence to his readers by giving vent to his views of Roman Catholicism. Although he had converted to Catholicism in his youth, he had come to view it as a universally intolerant and anti-national religion.³⁶

Education was “l'article important. C'est l'éducation qui doit donner aux ames la force nationale, et diriger tellement leurs opinions et leurs goûts, qu'elles soient patriotes par inclination, par passion, par nécessité. Un enfant en ouvrant ses yeux doit voir la patrie et jusqu'à la mort ne doit plus voir qu'elle.”³⁷ Whereas the education of other nations fitted them only for servitude, Poles should above all learn their own geography, history, and laws. They should exercise collectively and in public, in competitions that best fit their national genius—he suggested horsemanship. Education should lead Poles into lifetimes of public service, not professional employment.³⁸ Conditional on the approval of their fellow citizens, young men would become teachers, who would successively become lawyers, judges, envoys to the sejm, and senators. At the apex of this hierarchy of virtue would be the monarch.³⁹

Rousseau chose to believe that the Poles had become themselves—fierce lovers of freedom—through a relatively simple economy and austere lifestyle, continuing difference in morals and customs from the other peoples of Europe, and their constitutional institutions

³³ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 962.

³⁴ The point seems to have escaped Stephen T. Engel, ‘Rousseau and Imagined Communities’, *Review of Politics*, 67, 2005, 3, pp. 515–37. Cf. *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

³⁵ *OC*, vol. 3 p. 958.

³⁶ See *Du Contrat Social*, in *OC*, vol. 3, at pp. 460–469.

³⁷ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 966.

³⁸ *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 966–970.

³⁹ *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 1020–1036.

such as the confederation, the liberum veto, and the elective monarchy. To remain, themselves, and even to reclaim their nationhood as Poles, he advised great caution in correcting the Commonwealth's constitution ("ne méprisez pas celle qui vous a faits ce que vous êtes").⁴⁰ Instead, the Poles should seek to instil a fervent patriotism and sense of national difference in their nation. The economy should remain autarkic and agrarian with as little monetary exchange as possible. Industry and commerce should be avoided: their fruits were luxury and corruption. Rousseau, who hated professional lawyers, insisted that laws should be "clairs, courts et précis qu'il sera possible," durable, and above all revered in people's hearts.⁴¹ Ultimately, he believed in the extension of freedom to all inhabitants of the Commonwealth, but he was at one with his readers in advocating an extremely gradual pace. Not all stomachs were fit for liberty, he believed, and the quality of liberty was more important to him than the number of those that enjoyed it.

Ultimately Rousseau's call for a re-conception of the Polish nation—and by extension, any nation—was not about either its membership or this or that constitutional arrangement. He was concerned with the idea of forging the kind of nation that could withstand—for a while longer at least—the process of decay he detected in modern, enlightened, cosmopolitan European civilization. So what sort of nation did the Poles want to be? Did they want power or freedom? How could they survive, in the long run, the power of their neighbours? His answer was: by accentuating the things that distinguished them from other nations and by associating those things with their freedom. This fundamental challenge posed by Rousseau turned out to be highly applicable to the condition of statelessness and the struggle for national survival during the long nineteenth century. It remains relevant and controversial today, as the project of European integration encounters a profound crisis, strengthening the appeal to many—not only in Poland—of the idea of the national community. Rousseau's very obsession with ancient republican patriotism led him in the direction of modern ethnic nationalism.

⁴⁰ *OC*, vol. 3, p. 954.

⁴¹ *OC*, vol. 3, pp. 1000–1001.