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## Editorial

A republican tradition has become a very significant area of analysis for the last decades, mainly in English speaking science. A special tribute should be paid in this respect to the works of such writers – to mention only the first and most known of them – as John G.A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner or – in America – Bernard Bailyn. One of the most important conclusion one can draw from the like researches is that constitutional heritage of the “Atlantic” civilization, usually considered a modern one, is much more enrooted in older republican or civic traditions, which had been developing since the Renaissance. These traditions were, of course, strongly inspired by ancient political or historical narrations, which necessarily provided a valid setting for any enquiries concerning the republic, civic virtue and liberty. As the like reading suggest a broad revision of previous paradigms, not only “liberal” ones, it also has provoked a great debate about the sources and meaning of our contemporary constitutionalism, and citizenship or the very democratic institutions as well. But it also should prompt an adequate interest in different (from Anglo-American) traditions, especially those of them which at the time were believed to be the most republican. Accordingly, such scientific as well as intellectual tendencies should be expected

in the very northern Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands and – of course – Poland.

Although the last example is not sufficiently recognized in the West, perhaps due to a huge criticism over Poland or the Commonwealth of Both Nations (Poland and Lithuania) in the age of Enlightenment or – more presumably – its distance (also a linguistic one) from most analyzed Anglo-American centres of civic tradition, it should be considered one of the most republican experience in Europe of a couple of centuries. Such a belief was widely shared in Poland and abroad at least in the “golden age” of Polish humanism and up to the middle of the 17th century. However, even if a positive opinion of Polish liberty had changed in the following times (and it was also a fate of the better known “aristocratic republic” of Venice), the republican evaluation of Poland was still possible. This was best exemplified by one of the most spectacular lovers of the ancient republics in the 18th century, namely Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the author of the *Considerations of the Government of Poland*. As far as these identifications may be of a certain importance to Western scholars, it is, of course, much more a Polish task.

Hoping to recognize such challenges, we are committing a present issue of the “Horizons of Politics” to the problems of Polish Commonwealth and republicanism. The undertaken attempts cannot answer all important questions. Nevertheless, the issue gives a very promising opportunity to detect many crucial moments of Polish republican heritage. As the last arouse much deeper intellectual and historiographical controversies, the authors provide different, if not opposed readings. Eventually, the readers will be even left with a rather irresistible feeling of paradoxes. One of the most important problems is the question of the very nature of republican tradition and republicanism. Some authors connote them the tradition of political rhetoric aiming to motivate the love of liberty and, thus, civic responsibility for the commonwealth. But others rather suggest that a republican tradition is much more a philosophy of common good, inspired by the ancient reflection, not necessarily indicating a specific form of government. But even the last matter is still questionable as the very republic, defined in the classical reflection as a mixed form of government, could be diversely described throughout the centuries and with respect to different models of political discourses.

Thus, showing the differences and evolutions in Polish republican traditions, the authors cope with other important dilemmas, which are even of much more Polish nature. Namely, the possibility of the transition of Polish republicanism in the age of “modernity”, characterized especially by the weakening of feudal dependencies. Even if such problems are in pre-partitioned Poland rather a distant perspective, it does not mean that Polish republican thought was not acquainted of them. Quite opposite, some of Polish thinkers of the late 18th century began – more and more decisively – to question the exclusiveness of the privileges and liberties of *szlachta* demanding an enlargement of political rights. Although Poland had eventually fallen before the end of the century, a memory of the republican heritage of the ancient Commonwealth was still vivid, influencing the greatest Polish theorists of historiosophy of the age of Romanticism. One may rather form an opinion that it had been inspiring many generations of Polish *szlachta* to the struggle for “freedom, ours and yours”, maintaining a hope of reviving the Commonwealth yet in 1863.

But the problem of the very transition of Polish republicanism during a very long period of partitions, bringing huge intellectual and social changes within Polish society goes far beyond the reach of the present issue. But we hope that these questions, as well as other problems of republicanism (undertaken also in the section of *Varia*) will come back in the following issues.

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