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Niemcewicz's Kosciuszko: Honor, Self-Reflection and Self-Justification[2]

Abstract: The intriguing and mystifying relationship between Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1858–1841) and Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746–1817) extended through some of the most dramatic and devastating years in Polish history, 1794–1798. Niemcewicz served as Kosciuszko's aide-de-camp during the doomed 1794 Uprising. Both were wounded and captured at the Battle of Maciejowice and transported to St. Petersburg where they remained as prisoners-of-war until their release by Paul I (1754–1801) at the end of 1796. Forced to make a humiliating vow of loyalty to Paul, the two traveled together to the United States, arriving in Philadelphia in August, 1797. The relationship came to an abrupt end in May, 1798 when Kosciuszko, to Niemcewicz's surprise and anguish, returned to France leaving his faithful adjutant and companion behind through the assistance of then Vice-President Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) to ease Franco-American tensions and seek French support in the continued struggle for Polish independence.

The present study is an attempt to arrive at a composite "portrait" of Kosciuszko made by Niemcewicz as gleaned from his journals and memoirs; his prison memoirs for the years 1794–1796; a poem written as an appeal to Kosciuszko from 1813 in the aftermath of the defeat of Napoleon and finally his *Pochwała Kościuszki* or *Praise of Kosciuszko* from 1821, a belated epitaph after the death of the Commander in 1817. Memoir and journal writings are notoriously subjective, at times self-serving and susceptible to self-censorship. Niemcewicz's situation as a highly patriotic writer of extremely politically charged subject matter was impacted by the Russian censor as well as the real threat of retribution by Russian authorities.

Keywords: subjectivity, censorship and self-censorship, self-justification, honor, noble despair

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Streszczenie: Intrygująca i tajemnicza relacja między Julianem Ursynem Niemcewiczem (1858–1841) a Tadeuszem Kościuszką (1746–1817) przetrwała jeden z najbardziej dramatycznych i druzgocących okresów w polskiej historii, lata 1794–1798. Niemcewicz służył jako adiutant u boku Kościuszki podczas skazanego na klęskę powstania (1794). Obaj odnieśli rany i zostali schwytani w bitwie pod Maciejowicami, skąd przewieziono ich do Sankt Petersburga, gdzie byli przetrzymywani jako jeńcy wojenni aż do ich uwolnienia pod koniec 1796 r. przez cara Piotra I (1754–1801). Kościuszko i Niemcewicz musieli złożyć przed carem upokarzającą przysięgę wiernopoddańczą, po czym wyjechali do USA, gdzie w sierpniu 1797 r. zatrzymali się w Filadelfii. Ich stosunki uległy nagłemu zerwaniu w maju 1798 r., gdy Kościuszko, ku niemiłemu zaskoczeniu Niemcewicza, powrócił do Francji, opuszczając swojego wiernego adiutanta i towarzysza. Wyjazd, zorganizowany z pomocą ówczesnego wiceprezydenta Thomasa Jeffersona (1743–1826), miał na celu załagodzenie napięć na linii Francja–USA, jak również zabieganie o wsparcie Francji w nieustającej walce o niepodległość państwa polskiego.

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą uchwycenia złożonego „portretu" Kościuszki, jaki zawarł Niemcewicz w swoich dziennikach i wspomnieniach, więziennych zapiskach z lat 1794–1796, w wierszu z 1813 r. skomponowanym jako apel do Naczelnika po klęsce Napoleona, jak również w mowie *Pochwała Kościuszki*, napisanej kilka lat po śmierci Naczelnika w 1817 r. Zapiski w dziennikach i wspomnieniach są wyraźnie subiektywne, niekiedy wyrachowane i podatne na autocenzurę. Na sytuację Niemcewicza jako pisarza-patrioty poruszającego niezwykle wrażliwe politycznie tematy wpływ miała rosyjska cenzura, a także realna groźba kary ze strony władz rosyjskich.

Słowa kluczowe: subiektywność, cenzura i autocenzura, samousprawiedliwienie, honor, szlachetna rozpacz

I

Fact or fiction is a binary opposition akin to yes or no, right or wrong, true or false that imposes a categorical response among readers, one that has long been undermined by writers of prose and poetry. Here fact or fiction shares an affinity with such pairs as "objective or subjective," "history or literature," the latter element of each pair being associated with personal bias as opposed to the type of impersonal judgment made in a science laboratory or a court of law. Joseph Conrad, for one, has his narrator Marlowe express a disdainful attitude about the veracity of mere facts in a courtroom scene in *Lord Jim*: "[The three magistrates – J.J.J.] were fiercely distinct in the half-light of the big court-room where the audience seemed composed of staring shadows. They wanted facts. Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything!"[3] In a subsequent passage in the novel Conrad undermines the notion of truth by characterizing it as buoyed by convention, while seemingly making a virtue of falsehood: "It seemed to me I was being made to comprehend the Inconceivable – and I know of nothing to compare with the discomfort of such a sensation. I was made to look at the convention that lurks in all

[3] J. Conrad, *Lord Jim*, London 1982, p. 22.

truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood."[4] Isolating the conventional aspect of Niemcewicz's attitude toward Kosciuszko from the essential is a significant part of the present endeavor.

The following is an attempt to characterize the relationship between Niemcewicz and Kosciuszko in terms of genres, literary and non-literary. For the purposes of this paper fact or fiction is taken up as a distinction of genre, non-fiction vs. fictive or poetic form. *Literatura faktu* in its current sense is synonymous with "reportage"– journalistic prose that is based on first-hand observation, a form of writing that serves to give an impartial account or record of observed or documented events. In the present case of characterizing Niemcewicz's relationship with Kosciuszko in terms of the former's writings, four types of works are considered: a travel diary, a form of prison literature after the event, a lyric poem and a eulogy. The latter is an extensive description in written or spoken form following the death of a notable person. Only the third is strictly speaking a non-factual literary form, although in each genre, it shall become evident, subjective intentions interact with and influence objective descriptions. These four works were chosen since Kosciuszko figures prominently in two of them, the *American Travel Diaries* and *Notes sur ma Captivité*, while being the primary subject in the poem *Widmo* (*The Spectre of War*) and *Pochwała Kościuszki* (*Praise of Kosciuszko*).

Both Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz were products of Enlightenment thought that reflected on its own present. For Foucault, enlightenment is viewed as a process that releases us from the status of "immaturity," leading to a modification of preexisting relationships linking will, authority and the use of reason.[5] The two Poles believed in and fought for universal principles which applied to humanity as a whole. For them, enlightenment can be viewed as historical change affecting the political and social existence of Poles (and Americans) in particular and of all human beings. Both devoted themselves to creating social, institutional, ethical and political conditions to overcome immaturity.

Niemcewicz,[6] poet, politician and fervent patriot, was Kosciuszko's adjutant in the 1794 Insurrection, accompanied him at the doomed Battle of

[4] Ibidem, p. 66.

[5] M. Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, transl. L. Hochroth, C. Porter, Los Angeles 1997, p. 100.

[6] Stanislaw Libera commented on Niemcewicz's memoirs and travel writings through the revolutionary epoch in Poland and Europe and beyond, a period of over 55 years, providing numerous portraits and sketches of his contemporaries. Libera praises him as a talented writer, who makes everyday situations colorful, sizes them up captures their essence; the individuals come alive as do social settings, landscapes, whatever happens to come into his field of vision. With a lively charm and grace, as well as occasional sense of humor, he keeps the flow of his narrative, occasionally giving it a dramatic flair, mostly keeping himself as observer rather than participant. His travel writings and his memoirs have been used as historical documents. S. Libera, *Wiek oświecony*, Warszawa 1986, p. 262–279.

Maciejowice leading to the final partition of Poland. They were imprisoned in the Peter-Paul Prison for two years, though with a bare minimum of personal contact. Upon their release by Paul I (November 1796) Niemcewicz accompanied Kosciuszko to the United States.[7] The two arrived in Philadelphia, then the American capital, on August 18, 1797. Their relationship came to an abrupt end on the night of May 4, 1798 when Kosciuszko left for France under a veil of secrecy, leaving Niemcewicz behind to cover his tracks. The latter was deeply hurt by what he considered his abandonment by Kosciuszko, long harbored negative feelings toward the Polish national hero and the two never renewed their comradely relationship. This situation, however, was never made public, in spite of the fact that Niemcewicz described the rupture in detail and made several negative references to Kosciuszko in his American travel diary and in letters from America to his long-term confidante, Aleksandra Potocka (d. 1831).[8] Significantly, in the course of his long life, especially in the years of the Congress Kingdom (1815–1830) Niemcewicz enjoyed a special status in Warsaw society and generally among Poles which derived in part from the cult of Kosciuszko as national hero whose sheen of glory reflected warmly on his adjutant.

[7] En route he came into contact with French and Polish exiles, informing him of a Polish Legion being formed in Italy. Marek Nalepa describes the poetic reaction in Poland to Niemcewicz's stay in America and, most notably, his meeting with George Washington in the study: M. Nalepa, *Poetyckie echa wyjazdu J.U. Niemcewicza do Ameryki* [in:] *Na przełomie Oświecenia i Romantyzmu. O sytuacji w literaturze polskiej lat 1793–1830*, ed. P. Żbikowski, Rzeszów 1999, p. 151–173. Niemcewicz's own account of life in America has been translated into English by Metchie J.E. Budka who also provides an informative introduction in *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree* (1965).

[8] The following is one of several complaints made by Niemcewicz directed against Kosciuszko. Here he finds himself on the road to the Federal City and an eventual meeting with George Washington as instructed by Kosciuszko. "Amerykańskie oberże są bardzo nieprzyjemne: płaci się drogo, choć nie ma żadnych wygód. Pokój, w którym mieszkam, nie ma zamka i zawsze jest otwarty, nie ma wody ani ręcznika, trzeba chodzić myć się pod pompę. Mam wyjechać o trzeciej w nocy, muszę jeszcze spakować walizę. Nic mnie tak nie niecierpliwi, jak uważanie na koszule, męczę się przy ich pakowaniu i wypakowaniu. Potrzebne mi było to wszystko? Potrzebny mi wyjazd do Ameryki? Czyż mogłem kiedy przypuszczać, że zostanę tak osamotniony, jak jestem teraz? Och, panie Kościuszko, jak pozbawione serca jest to, co zrobiłeś!"; J.U. Niemcewicz, *Podróże po Ameryce, 1797–1807*, z rękop. wyd. A. Wellman-Zalewska, Wrocław 1959, p. 117. On a much later occasion as he dreads making his way back to America on 9 August 1804 he once again encounters bad luck and finds it necessary to blame Kosciuszko for it: "Przykry dzień, był to jeden z najcięższych i najprzykrzejszych dni dla mnie, czarne wzbudzający uwagi. Ile podróż moja do Europy była pomyślna, tyle powrót do Ameryki był pełen zawodów i przykrości. Gdybym nie był zawiedziony i porzucony przez Kościuszkę, widziałbym się dzisiaj wspośród moich ziomków, i choć w podbitym kraju, dzieliłbym z nimi przykrości i nadzieje, bez kołatania się na morzach i lądach, z małą nadzieją jakichkolwiek słodyczy; ibidem, p. 356. See: E. Jeglińska, *Między marzeniem a rzeczywistością. Ameryka w twórczości Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza*, Poznań 2010 for a selection of Niemcewicz's correspondence from America.

One of the complicating factors impinging upon the elucidation on the nature of the relationship of Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz has been the untimely publication (or lack thereof) of Niemcewicz's writings. The first to be considered, *The American Travel Diaries*, though written over the years 1796–1807, was only published in Polish in the year 1959 – the English edition, published in 1965, left out extended sections describing the journey from Petersburg to Philadelphia (Dec. 1796–Aug. 1797) and sections in which Niemcewicz describes his 1803 trip to Poland following his father's death, his stay in Warsaw, Puławy and Skoki and his return trip to America – including his final meeting with Kosciuszko in Paris. *Notes sur ma Captivité en 1794, 1795 et 1796*, though written and completed in 1800 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, was published posthumously in 1843 during the Great Emigration in Paris, initiated by Adam Mickiewicz, president of the Towarzystwo Historii;[9] the English translation and publication followed shortly in 1844, a testament to Niemcewicz's efforts in championing the Polish cause in Great Britain in the early 1830s. *Widmo* was written in 1814, but was not published until 1925; the final work to be considered, *Pochwała Kościuszki*, composed in 1821, remained in manuscript form until its recent publication in *Dziennik z lat 1820–1828* in 2012.

II

Niemcewicz's *American Travel Diaries* is the earliest of the four works to have been written, even though *Notes sur ma Captivité*... describes events that took place in the years immediately preceding Niemcewicz's stay in America. The latter work was undertaken in response to Kosciuszko's departure from America in an attempt to demonstrate Niemcewicz's loyalty to Kosciuszko and the sacrifices he made on behalf of Poland at a time when he was isolated from his countrymen (1800) and concerned about self-regarding notions of honor and reputation.

Niemcewicz sought to provide a factual account of American life, places, individuals and nature based on his observations sharpened by previous travel writing. Budka characterizes Niemcewicz in the following manner:

> Niemcewicz was an empiricist in his writings and sought to provide details from which his readers might draw their own conclusions. His perceptions were acute

[9] From the introduction to the original 1843 edition of the *Notes* written by Karol Sienkiewicz, Secretary of the Historical Society (Comité Historique): "La Comitée historique, presidée actuellement par M. Adam Mickiewicz, professeur de literature slave au College de France ayant ordonnée la publication de ce manuscript" J.U. Niemcewicz, *Notes sur Ma Captivité á Saint-Peterbourg, en 1794, 1795 et 1796*, Ouvrage inedit de Julien Ursin Niemcewicz. Publie d'apres le manuscript autographe de l'auteur, par l'ordre de Comité Historique Polonais en Paris, a la Biblioteque Polonaise, 1843, p. XIV.

> and the breadth and comprehension of his vision large. To Niemcewicz, multiplicity of detail was implicit in his intent, whether writing biography, diaries, memoirs or histories.[10]

The *American Diaries* remains an impressive and useful source of information for social historians and historians of the Early Republic; insofar as it relates to Niemcewicz's characterization of Kosciuszko, a man of universal acclaim,[11] the reader is clearly disappointed. This is no doubt due to Kosciuszko's desire to maintain a low profile in the aftermath of his prison experience where he learned of the extraordinarily long reach of the Russian spy network. He wished to avoid arousing any suspicion or undue attention to his behind-the-scenes efforts to return to the European continent to continue the fight for national independence.[12]

The most remarkable passage in the *Diaries* regarding Kosciuszko stands out from the largely objective writing of the diary as a whole. It concerns events that took place on the evening of May 4, 1798. Niemcewicz, recently honored with membership in the American Philosophical Society, having been nominated by Thomas Jefferson, then its president, had just returned from one such meeting to the rooms he shared with Kosciuszko. The diary at this point shifts from description to dialogue form in relating exchanges between Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz:

> "Mr. Niemcewicz, you must give me your word of honor that you will tell no one what I am about to confide in you. And that you will do what I ask of you."
> "You ask nothing dishonorable?" "No, I give you my word."
> "Then tell me." "I leave this night for Europe. I leave alone"
> "Stupified, petrified at this confidence which came as a bolt from the blue, I wanted, being recovered from my astonishment, to know the reasons for this journey and the place to which he was going. I was told that he did not know himself, neither where he was going nor why."[13]

[10] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797–1799, 1805 with Some Further Account of Life in New Jersey*, transl. ed. with an Introduction and Notes by M.J.E. Budka (Vol. XIV of the New Jersey Historical Society) Elizabeth, NJ 1965, p. XXXVII.

[11] Kosciuszko's visitors in London, for example, included William Wilberforce, Charles James Fox, Richard Sheridan and the Duchess of Devonshire.

[12] See in particular Dihm's extended discourse on Kosciuszko's release from prison and his subsequent journey from Petersburg to Philadelphia [in:] J. Dihm, *Kościuszko nieznany*, Wrocław 1969, p. 192 ff. See B. Oleksowicz, *Legenda Kościuszki. Narodziny*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 45 ff. for insight into Kosciuszko's disastrous failure in realizing his Polish aim in spite of his efforts and the crisis facing Niemcewicz's generation in the post-Napoleonic epoch.

[13] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine*..., op. cit., p. 65.

Receiving no satisfactory response, he nonetheless offers to accompany Kosciuszko, concerned about the state of his health and well-being. He receives the curt response, "That is impossible."

At this point, the exchange takes on a dramatic turn with a verbal attack against Kosciuszko:

> "Then it was to leave me all alone in this strange land separated everywhere by seas that you proposed to me, asked me to come here? Is it such a token of *confidence and friendship* that you give me that no more than a few hours before your departure you disclose to me an idea, a plan that you have had perhaps since Europe? Did you think that I would betray you?" "No, but, but – "What will they think here of this strange flight." "I beseech you to tell everyone that I have gone to take the waters in Virginia. You will leave Philadelphia in three days and you will go in that direction saying that it is to rejoin me." "You give me then a fine commission. I must tell lies here; I must run about the country in order to tell more lies. Ah! In what embarrassment you have placed me! Alone, without friends, and without means."[14]

Niemcewicz would continue to fume at Kosciuszko's treatment of him long after this night; on June 28th he writes in his diary: "in order to escape all questions of where Kosciuszko might be and to free myself from the sad necessity of constant lying, I left early so as to see as few people as possible."[15] Here Niemcewicz reduces Kosciuszko to a stammering fool, accusing him of betraying their friendship and railing at him for the lack of trust he is showing to his erstwhile adjutant and comrade-in-arms. When Kosciuszko recovers himself, he speaks as a commanding officer to a subordinate. Niemcewicz, however, accepts the "commission" most unwillingly.

The notion that Niemcewicz was a privileged friend and confidant of Kosciuszko is one that has long been represented in the literature in Russian, Polish and American sources alike. In a description of Kosciuszko's mental and physical state during his imprisonment in St. Petersburg, Sergei Gorianov introduces Niemcewicz as Kosciuszko's "сподвижник его и друг."[16] Czaja in his monograph on Niemcewicz frequently refers to the close friendship he shared with Kosciuszko[17]. Dihm frequently refers to Niemcewicz as Kosciuszko's devoted and most loyal friend[18]. In a recent biography of Kosciuszko, *Peasant Prince* (2010), Storozynski likewise states in his preface that

[14] Ibidem [italics – J.J.J.].

[15] Ibidem, p. 125.

[16] S.M. Gorianov, *Zatochenie F. Kostiushki v kreposti (1794–1795 gg.*), Sankt-Peterburg 1912, p. 2.

[17] A. Czaja, *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: fragment biografii, 1758–1796*, Toruń 2005, p. 230.

[18] J. Dihm, op. cit., e.g., p. 177, 224.

Niemcewicz was Kosciuszko's "friend and confidante" impressing the reader early on about the nature of their relationship.[19] It is the present contention that, their close wartime relationship notwithstanding, Kosciuszko was never a friend of Niemcewicz in the conventional sense and Kosciuszko's unwillingness to confide in Niemcewicz is clearly evident at this critical juncture in their lives. That he did confide certain facts about himself to Niemcewicz after their departure from St. Petersburg is true, in particular his two attempts at suicide, one in the immediate aftermath of the defeat at Maciejowice when he tried to shoot himself in the mouth, but the gun misfired; the second being his hunger strike in the prison in Petersburg, resulting in his removal to the Orlov Palace for the duration of his incarceration.[20] This type of revelation is an isolated example while other indications of intimate friendship are sorely lacking in Niemcewicz's accounts of the enigmatic Kosciuszko.

Kosciuszko's temperament and range of experience were far removed from those of Niemcewicz. Kosciuszko was reserved in private life, in contrast to the brilliance and courage he displayed on the battlefield. Though he was a highly educated professional military officer, he was an ineffective writer; hence the need for Niemcewicz's powerful pen during the Insurrection. Kosciuszko developed several close relationships with comrades in arms during the American Revolutionary War, including General Horatio Gates (1727–1806) and John Armstrong (1758–1843), whom he visited during his second eight-month stay in the United States. Kosciuszko's deeply felt republican values were often communicated to Americans: his desire to do away with the monarchy in favor of the rule of law; planning a Polish army on the American model and in serving and preserving the nation and national interests; his most highly cherished principles of equality and liberty, which instilled a strong sense of patriotism among soldiers serving under him. His dream of liberating the enfranchised peasants to contribute to the universal good and

[19] A. Storozynski, *The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kosciuszko and the Age of Revolution*, New York 2001, p. XIV.

[20] The journey from Maciejowice to Petersburg lasted from Oct. 13 to Dec. 10, 1794; Kosciuszko was imprisoned in the Petropavlovsk Fortress until his release on November 17, 1796. He was later moved to the Orlov Palace, and treated by an English physician. Accompanied by a cook and his valet, Negro John, in Petersburg captivity. Kosciuszko's "confessions" appear in Wellman-Zalewska's more complete version of the *American Diaries*, J.U. Niemcewicz, *Podróże po Ameryce*..., op. cit., p. 4: "Kościuszko dwa zwierzenia mi uczynił, które tu umieszczę. Podczas bitwy Maciejowickiej, gdy już wszystko było stracone, i gdy kozacy już go uchwycić mieli, włożył on pistolet w usta, pociągnął za cyngiel, lecz krucica nie wypaliła. W początkach zaś swego uwięzienia w fortecy petersburskiej tak mu życie było zbrzydło, że chciał się głodem umorzyć. Przez pewien przeciąg czasu żywił się tylko kilkoma łyżkami zupy, czym tak skurczył sobie wnętrzności i tak się osłabił, iż co chwila śmierci jego oczekiwano."

a unified Polish nation went hand in hand with his efforts to gain political freedom for Americans and to liberate Black American slaves.[21]

Once he became the Commander-in-chief of the insurrection, Kosciuszko for all intents and purposes relinquished his private life and friendships and devoted himself exclusively to the cause of Polish national independence. This identity continued after his release from prison when his primary ambition was to return to the theater of war. He no doubt expected Niemcewicz likewise to prioritize national needs over personal ones. The latter was a social lion, a passionate and often inspired orator, at home in many of the European capitals, a fearless satirist, yet one who was equally passionate in his devotion to the Polish cause. His closest relationships were with aristocratic members of Polish society, Adam Kazimierz and Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, and Ignacy and Stanislaw Kostka, and the latter's wife, Aleksandra. This is borne out by the rich correspondence he maintained with them. Niemcewicz's stay in Italy in 1793–1794 is described in detail in almost daily letters to Ignacy Potocki,[22] the majority still unpublished. Niemcewicz presented eulogies at the funerals of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski and the two brothers Potoccy. Adam Jerzy survived Niemcewicz and honored him with the first biography of the Polish Nestor, which remains an invaluable documentary source, supplemented with a rich addendum of their correspondence.[23]

Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz, on the other hand, rarely corresponded, never as close friends.[24] Czaja cites a brief exchange of letters between the two after Kosciuszko came to Florence in December, 1793, paying a visit to Niemcewicz as fellow conspirator on his way to Rome in order to seek out diplomatic support for the Polish cause from the Vatican.[25] Majchrowski cites a letter Niemcewicz sent to Kosciuszko in Paris, informing him curtly of having

[21] See Śreniowska's descriptions of Kosciuszko in terms of the career of an impoverished nobleman becoming one of the outstanding heroes of the Polish nation whose name became a mantra, a motto, and a symbol of the most admired national traits which he himself embodied in the struggle for national independence and the mythology of Kosciuszko and his role in forging a national consciousness. K. Śreniowska, *Kościuszko, bohater narodowy: opinie współczesnych i potomnych, 1794–1946*, Warszawa 1973. See Nash and Hodges for Kosciuszko's relations with Black Americans; G.B. Nash, G.R.G. Hodges, *Friends of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and Agrippa Hull*, New York 2008.

[22] See A. Czaja, op. cit., p. 230 ff.

[23] A.J. Czartoryski, *Żywot J.U. Niemcewicza*, Paryż–Berlin–Poznań 1860.

[24] Dihm refers to correspondence concerning Niemcewicz's support for Kosciuszko's request to transfer to the Lithuanian army during the Great Sejm, Bibl. PAN w Krakowie, rps 1171 [in:] J. Dihm, op. cit., p. 403.

[25] Kosciuszko left for Italy in early 1794 supposedly to meet up with "his friend" Niemcewicz, but in fact to visit with fellow conspirators. He worried that Philip Mazzei, the emissary of the Polish king in Italy, would inform the king and therefore the Russians of his intentions. Kosciuszko refused to take on leadership of the insurrection until the Polish serfs were freed. "I shall not fight for the gentry alone... I desire the freedom of the entire nation and only for it will I risk my life." A. Czaja, op. cit., p. 106.

carried out the General's instructions, yet refusing to accept any of the proffered money: "Nie tknę niczego, zarówno pieniędzy jak sreber. Za przyjaźń nie płaci się pieniędzmi, żąda ona wzajemności, zaufania, którego nie było z pańskiej strony. Żegnaj, oby losy pana były równie szczęśliwe, jak moje są godne litości."[26] Thus on this sour and chiding note for all practical purposes ends the asymmetric relationship between National Leader and adjutant.[27] It was Jefferson who later apprised Niemcewicz of startling facts concerning the Polish leader's good health. In fact, Kosciuszko's closest friend and most intimate confidant at this time was the American vice-president.

In the summer of 1797 Jefferson was the undeclared leader of the Democratic-Republican Party at a time of Federalist domination of the U.S. government.[28] Jefferson, as Republican vice-president, was isolated politically and welcomed the arrival of an American hero, a Francophile and a true republican, to the American scene. Kosciuszko shared the American's enlightenment values on progress and human betterment, and was devoted to universal principles of equality and liberty. Jefferson was attracted by Kosciuszko's selflessness and strength of character, as well as his enlightened thinking.[29] Jefferson soon recruited him to his pro-French policy at a time when the Quasi War was rearing its head and American shipping interests where being ravaged at sea by French frigates. Kosciuszko's part in fulfilling Jefferson's mission of improving Franco-American relations went hand in hand with his own efforts to bring to fruition the French Directory's and later Napoleon's promises, though ultimately self-serving, to resurrect Poland. In the summer of 1798 the passage of the Alien and Sedition acts became law. Since Kosciuszko, in spite of having served in the American army for seven years, was never granted American citizenship. His conspiracy with Jefferson could have entailed imprisonment as well as being permanently barred from gaining citizenship. Prompted by Jefferson's urging to go to France to heal the breach between France and the United States, Kosciuszko knew that secrecy was of the utmost importance. Jefferson secured a passport for Kosciuszko under the assumed name of Thomas Kanberg "perhaps of Germany."[30]

Niemcewicz was not privy to any of Kosciuszko's secret dealings with Jefferson nor was he apprised of the General's final generous deed on American

[26] S. Majchrowski, *O Julianie Niemcewiczu. Opowieść biograficzna*, Warszawa 1982, p. 200.

[27] Kosciuszko's letter to Jefferson is dated October 2, 1798, *Correspondence. Jefferson, Kościuszko*, ed. B. Grzeloński, Warsaw 1978, p. 49–50.

[28] For insightful information on Jefferson and Jeffersonian values in the late 1790s see J.J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, New York 1996, p. 139–199, and J. Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*, Oxford 2004, p. 99–125.

[29] In a letter to General Gates Jefferson declared Kosciuszko to be "as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known, and of that liberty which is to go to all, and not to the few or rich alone." Quoted in G.B. Nash, G.R.G. Hodges, op. cit., p. 159.

[30] Ibidem, p. 161.

soil by either Kosciuszko or Jefferson. Kosciuszko donated the vast bulk of his assets gained in the service of the American Army to securing the liberty and welfare of Black American slaves with Jefferson serving as executor of the testament. Jefferson's free participation in an honor-bound pact would help end slavery in America. The trust Kosciuszko had in Jefferson, though ultimately misplaced, showed the high value he placed on his friendship. Jefferson's whole-hearted endorsement of Kosciuszko's plan served as a sacred pledge. The will that Kosciuszko left in Jefferson's hand was dated May 5, 1798, the day he left for France, the day he "abandoned" Niemcewicz.[31]

Kosciuszko's correspondence with Jefferson spanned a period of twenty years, the last letter Kosciuszko addressed to Jefferson dated several months before his death in October 1817, a total of 41 letters.[32] Niemcewicz's own correspondence with Jefferson is a testament to their cordial relations and mutual respect.[33] In the selected correspondence of Kosciuszko edited by Adam M. Skałkowski for the years 1790–1817, Niemcewicz is mentioned on two separate occasions, both times in footnotes: his handwriting is identified in a letter of Kosciuszko's in 1794, the year of insurrection; a second reference to Niemcewicz dating from 1801 reveals the conviction of Kosciuszko as expressed by his long-time adjutant and military cohort, Stanislaw Fiszer, of Niemcewicz's non-republican sentiments as indicated by the latter's support for pro-monarchic, pro-Russian politics through his association with A.J. Czartoryski. The gap in personal relations of Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz was never to be bridged.[34]

In keeping his word to Kosciuszko, Niemcewicz set off on a journey south, reaching Georgetown on May 21, 1798 where he met Washington at his granddaughter's home. He was uncharacteristically restrained in prevaricating to Washington about General Kosciuszko and his whereabouts: "The first word that I said to this great man was a lie."[35] News of Kosciuszko's secret departure – this "needlessly mysterious flight" – became common knowledge only in September, 1798 when copies of the French *Moniteur* reported his arrival in Paris on June 28.[36]

[31] Ibidem, p. 165 ff.

[32] *Correspondence. Jefferson, Kościuszko*, op. cit., p. 36.

[33] See Krzyżanowski and Kusielewicz for the extant Niemcewicz-Jefferson Correspondence which is in included in the volume L. Krzyżanowski, E. Kusielewicz, *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and America*, New York 1961.

[34] T. Kościuszko, *Z korespondencji Kościuszki urzędowej i prywatnej 1790–1817*, ed. A.M. Skałkowski, Kórnik 1939, p. 37.

[35] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine...*, op. cit., p. 84.

[36] G.B. Nash, G.R.G. Hodges, op. cit., p. 167.

III

Notes of My Captivity was written in 1800[37] in Elizabeth, New Jersey before Niemcewicz took on a settled existence there with Susannah Kean. It is part diary, part anti-Russian diatribe with a generally positive depiction of Paul I. It is also an apology for Niemcewicz, an attempt to provide a permanent record of his deep concern for Kosciuszko, their abiding friendship and his devotion to the Polish cause. It addresses Niemcewicz's fears of a loss of honor in the eyes of his countrymen after being left in the New World to fend for himself. The chronology of events depicted in the *Notes*... was written after Kosciuszko's departure from Philadelphia when Niemcewicz felt abandoned.

In the *Notes*..., Niemcewicz depicts himself as Kosciuszko's inseparable companion during the insurrection, both at camp headquarters in Marymount and on the battlefield. Yet Niemcewicz only joined him on June 16, 1794,[38] blithely unaware of the momentous events in Krakow and Raclawice earlier that spring. Niemcewicz highlights the shared experience with the Commander-in-chief: penning proclamations, orders of the day, and bulletins in the name of Kosciuszko; his accompaniment of Kosciuszko to Maciejowice, their shared blood sacrifice in the course of the battle, an indisputable badge of courage under fire, and their shared captivity in Petersburg. Upon their release two years later, the account ends with Niemcewicz agreeing, albeit somewhat reluctantly, to accompany him to America.

Niemcewicz's depiction of the fateful battlefield at Maciejowice is characterized by a vividness of expression and detail, creating an immediacy of experience. In so doing he creates a comradely bond between the two Poles. He reveals the ever-present dangers of warfare confronting both Kosciuszko and himself on the battlefield in their exposure to enemy fire: "One of those grenades burst just between Gen Kosciuszko, his aide-de-camp Fiszer, and myself, and its splinters passing over our heads, struck, at fifty paces, a gunner, who fell dead on the spot."[39] Niemcewicz presents himself as a courageous and alert participant, ready to be of service whenever and wherever needed. He is at the forefront of the action, informing Kosciuszko of ongoing

[37] The French original written in 1800 while Niemcewicz was residing in New Jersey was left by him in 1841 to the Polish Historical Committee of Paris, who had it published in 1843; it was translated into English in 1844 and published in Edinburgh. Rusinowa comments: "W 1843 r. Wydział Historyczny opublikował pracę *Notes sur ma captivité*, w której Niemcewicz opisał swój pobyt w więzieniu po klęsce maciejowickiej. Wspomnienia te cieszyły się powodzeniem wśród czytelników nie tylko polskich". J.U. Niemcewicz, *Dziennik 1839–1841*, ed. I. Rusinowa, Pułtusk 2008, p. 8.

[38] B. Szyndler, *Powstanie kościuszkowskie 1794*, Warszawa 1994, p. 90–191.

[39] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Notes of My Captivity in Russia*, transl. A. Laski, Charleston, SC 2009 (reprint of 1844 edition: Edinburgh), p. 18.

developments, encouraging wavering troops from leaving the battlefield – members of a squadron from his native province of Brześć:

> I ran to animate them, and having put myself at their head, was going to check the progress of the Russian cavalry, when, being already near them, I was struck by a bullet in the right arm, above the elbow. The blood was streaming; I remember, however, that the pain was not the first sensation I experienced at this moment..., it was the pride that I felt of having shed my blood for my fatherland.[40]

This was a feeling all too soon "dissipated by the sight of the general defeat of our army."[41]

Yet his primary concern is for the General himself. Recalling the melee on the battlefield Niemcewicz describes the following scene:

> I was looking everywhere for General Kosciuszko... I found the General at last, engaged in rallying a small detachment of cavalry; his horse was killed by a cannon shot, and he had just mounted another which was immediately brought him, when suddenly, a new corps of the enemy's horse showed itself on our front; we attacked and repulsed them, but all the Russian light-dragoons soon rushed upon us, the Cossacks took us on the flanks, our little army gave way, and every one, for safety, betook himself to flight, as well as he could.[42]

Niemcewicz realizes all too well that "Everything is lost no matter what becomes of me"; he is immediately surrounded by a band of Cossacks and is taken prisoner. The entire Polish contingent is either killed or captured. Meanwhile, Kosciuszko's attempt to break through Russian lines fails; he finds himself soon surrounded, quickly wounded three times, the last one rendering him unconscious.[43]

Niemcewicz is a writer of sensibility, and at times sentimentality, stylizing his descriptions for maximum emotional effect while emphasizing his special feelings for Kosciuszko:

> Gathering at the Russian headquarters, the same house which had served as Polish headquarters several hours before, we could not restrain our tears when we saw ourselves (i.e., Niemcewicz together with the Polish generals Kaminski, Sierakowski, Kniaziewicz, and Brigadier Kopeć) brought together by this common

[40] Ibidem, p. 20.
[41] Ibidem.
[42] Ibidem, p. 21.
[43] Ibidem, p. 21–22.

> misfortune. The report of General Kosciuszko's death rendered the grief of all still deeper, *especially mine*.[44]

Niemcewicz describes in careful detail the wounds, not quite mortal, inflicted upon the body of the defeated hero, still unconscious and oblivious to his adjutant's presence:

> His head and body covered with blood, contrasted in a dreadful manner with the livid paleness of his face... He could scarcely breathe. *This was very painful to me*; the silence, or rather sullen stupor, was, at last, interrupted by the sobs and cries of a grief as violent as sincere. I embraced the General, who had not yet recovered his senses, and from this moment until we were thrown into solitary prisons, *I remained with him*.[45]

Even as the general remains unconscious, he is taken to a large room "where I remained by his bedside weeping... The night which succeeded that unfortunate day was *the most painful in my life*. While I lay on a heap of straw, my mind was suffering a thousand times more than my body." Niemcewicz was forced to bear witness to

> he groaning and imprecations of the dying and wounded... It was in the midst of those exclamations of pain, despair and death, having before me *an expiring friend*, suffering from my own wound, shivering from cold which began to be very severe, broken-hearted, with the mind overpowered by a thousand reflections on that unfortunate day, and its consequences so fatal to my unhappy country

– convincingly, the most miserable night of his life.[46]

Niemcewicz paints a moving picture, albeit lacking the restraint of the Spartan, battle-hardened warrior, of a black day in Polish history. He is careful to magnify the mental anguish amidst so much suffering, and the personal nature of his relationship with Kosciuszko, gazing upon him, sobbing over him in outbursts of uncontrolled feeling, even embracing him, referring to him as "an expiring friend" while the general remains unconscious, unaware of the feelings and concern wracking the mind and heart of Niemcewicz.

Niemcewicz's rendition of Kosciuszko is that of an intimate and beloved friend who would reciprocate the poet's warm feelings if he could. Kosciuszko regained consciousness the following morning, "seeing me wounded at his side: 'Alas! We are prisoners of the Russians. I am with you and will never leave you.' 'How happy am I to have such a friend in misfortune!' answered he with

[44] Ibidem, p. 27 [italics – J.J.J.].
[45] Ibidem, p. 29 [italics – J.J.J.].
[46] Ibidem, p. 29–30 [italics – J.J.J.].

tears in his eyes."[47] Niemcewicz underscores his heartfelt love and absolute devotion to his friend anchored with a promise never to abandon him. The feeling is reciprocated as he affirms this strongest of bonds by referring to Niemcewicz as a true friend. This is one of the few times in Niemcewicz's writing that he records a personal exchange between the two in such a tone and manner that is in stark contrast to their recorded encounter on May 4, 1798.

A second reference, concerning the state of Kosciuszko's health, is more intriguing as it bears upon their relationship after being released from prison.

> I perceived that General Kosciuszko, who, on the first day after the battle, could walk pretty well leaning upon the arm of a man, lost all at once the use of his legs, and when we left the carriage, this weakness was the more astonishing, as his wound on the head was perceptibly improving, and the pike-thrusts on his back seemed to be entirely closed.[48]

One of the controversies surrounding Kosciuszko[49] is the alleged simulation on the part of Kosciuszko of his physical inability to walk under his own power. His apparently helpless state was a major argument in convincing Niemcewicz to accompany him on his trip from Petersburg to Philadelphia. In this passage, he reveals his astonishment at Kosciuszko's sudden inability to walk, yet makes no further comment here or elsewhere in the *Notes*... His continued belief in Kosciuszko's apparent crippled state was the cause of his concern on the fateful night of May 4, 1798, believing the General incapable of undertaking a hazardous journey on his own, learning to his dismay of Kosciuszko's healthy state via Jefferson; another instance indicating that they did not share a confiding friendship.

In the course of his interrogation in prison, Niemcewicz characterized his relationship with Kosciuszko as "friend and volunteer officer."[50] In a bastion of the fortress, he encountered his interrogator, Major Samoilov, a nephew of Potemkin. Among other issues, Russian authorities were interested in Kosciuszko's relations with Jacobin France, having known previously about his visit to Paris in January, 1793. Niemcewicz replied: "I have been told that the Committee of Public Safety had promised to General Kosciuszko three millions of *livres tournois*, and some officers of artillery, but I can assure you that we have seen neither a single officer nor a single sou."[51]

This was a topic of extreme sensitivity to Kosciuszko, since he became apprised of the long reach of Russian intelligence and the danger of confiding in

[47] Ibidem, p. 32.
[48] Ibidem, p. 49.
[49] J. Dihm, op. cit., p. 268 ff.
[50] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Notes of My Captivity*..., op. cit., p. 100.
[51] Ibidem, p. 109.

anyone. The presence of Russian agents in Saxony and their spying on Poles was well known to Polish emigrés and so Kosciuszko's mission to France was kept under wraps. He left Leipzig on 17 January 1793. On his travels through Belgium he met Gen. Charles Dumouriez, who had served in the Confederacy of Bar as advisor of the confederates. Considering him trustworthy and a friend of the Poles, Kosciuszko confided in him the details of his mission and the nature of the documents he was carrying, unaware Dumouriez was already in communiqué with Austrian authorities. He informed the Prussians of Kosciuszko's plans, who in turn conveyed them to the Russians[52] Hence Kosciuszko's lack of confidence in others and his paranoid suspiciousness and determination to maintain a low profile upon his release from prison.

The two had virtually no direct communication in the course of the two years in prison. Niemcewicz writes that he prevailed upon guards to take two notes to General Kosciuszko describing in them his situation and the severities to which he was subjected.

> I requested him to ask the Empress that I might be removed to his prison, being sure that, in consequence of the great regard which she had for him, his request would have every chance of success. He answered me the first time *with many protestations of friendship*, but without saying whether he would do what I proposed to him, and finally begged me not to write to him, lest I should compromise him. The second response, six months after sending his missive, Kosciuszko merely ordered his negro [his Black servant Jean – J.J.J.] to tell me, verbally, that he had received my note.[53]

Kosciuszko's tone of indifference in the two responses casts light on the increasing mental isolation of Kosciuszko and an unwillingness to communicate with his adjutant.

Upon his release Kosciuszko asked leave of Paul to retire to America, which the tsar granted, promising him the means of facilitating the voyage.[54] This generosity on Paul's part would become a bone of contention between Kosciuszko and Niemcewicz. For the latter, Paul I was a savior, one whose memory he would revere for the rest of his life. For Kosciuszko, Paul, in spite of his magnanimity, remained a hated symbol of absolute authority, a tyrant ruling over millions of serfs and the divided Polish lands, one manipulated by his ministers into forcing him to sign an oath of loyalty that compromised his strong sense of honor.[55]

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[52] B. Szyndler, *Tadeusz Kościuszko, 1746–1817*, Warszawa 1991, p. 173.

[53] Ibidem, p. 195 [italics – J.J.J.].

[54] Ibidem, p. 217.

[55] See Dihm's discussion of Kosciuszko's complicated relationship with Paul upon his release from prison in November 1796 and the extorted oath of loyalty he was forced to make to

Niemcewicz soon discovered that Kosciuszko was truly a friend in need. Upon Niemcewicz's belated release from prison, he made his way to the Orlov Palace where he laid eyes upon Kosciuszko after two years of separation.

> I found him lying upon his chaise longue, with his head enveloped in bandages, and one leg entirely lifeless; but I was still more affected on perceiving that his voice was almost gone, and that there was great confusion in his ideas. He seemed struck with terror, spoke but in low tones, and whenever we raised our voices, he made signs with his finger to warn us that the servants were listening, and that they were all spies.[56]

Niemcewicz's description conveys an image of Kosciuszko as being broken physically and emotionally, helpless, withdrawn and terrorized by paranoia.

At this point, however, Kosciuszko makes a claim on Niemcewicz as friend to sacrifice his own interests to convey him to America.

> 'I know that you have suffered much,' said he, 'but you must complete your sacrifice; you must do me one favor, and promise to go with me to America.' – 'You are aware of my attachment to you,' said I, 'but after so many misfortunes, after so long an absence from home, I should be glad to see my paternal hearth, and to settle my family affairs...' 'But have I not enough now,' said he, 'for us both!' – 'I should be sorry,' said I, 'to be burdensome to you, – I will first go and gather the remains of my small patrimony.' – 'I set out in eight days,' said he, 'look at the state in which I am, see if I am able to go alone, if I am not in need of *a friend to take care of me, – can you abandon me*?' And he began to shed tears. 'Enough,' exclaimed I, 'no, I will not abandon you; I will go with you.' He tenderly embraced me. Thus the very same day on which I broke the fetters with which my enemies had loaded me, friendship laid new ones on me.[57]

Niemcewicz very appositely has Kosciuszko emphasize the words "friend" and "abandon" in his culminating appeal to his adjutant and fellow nobleman's sense of generosity in acceding to Kosciuszko's will. Of course, Niemcewicz penned this some twelve to fifteen months after his own abandonment by Kosciuszko. He awaited the day appointed for their departure from the forbidding chill of the Petersburg court with a sense of stoicism and relief. "My word was given to Kosciuszko, and I could not recall it."[58] Yet the ghost of the "fact" of Kosciuszko's "abandonment" of Niemcewicz was to haunt the latter for many years to come.

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the Russian sovereign, J. Dihm, op. cit., p. 192 ff. For Niemcewicz's attitude toward Paul, see A. Czaja, op. cit., p. 286 ff.

[56] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Notes of My Captivity*..., op. cit., p. 222.

[57] Ibidem, p. 222–223 [italics – J.J.J.].

[58] Ibidem, p. 245.

IV

In a recently published collection of essays (2015), the historian Władysław Zajewski provides an intriguing account of the truth-telling capacity of the historian versus the poet. "Wszyscy wyznawcy muzy Clio deklarowali, że piszą prawdę i tylko prawdę."[59] According to Zajewski, Roman historians formed certain value judgments relating to Hellenistic society as a whole in opposition to a directive of Aristotle in whose *Poetics* the Greek philosopher "odmówił historii możliwości stosowania uogólniających sądów filozoficznych. Dowodził, że 'poezja jest filozoficzniejsza i głębsza od historii, bo przedstawia więcej to, co jest ogólne, a historia to, co jest szczegółowe, indywidualne.'"[60]

Tzvetan Todorov, meanwhile, states that eloquence has the capacity to produce the effect of truth; hence the success of the Sophists, masters of eloquence, for whom producing the effect of truth is more highly valued than truth itself. Todorov invokes Modernity's claims that fiction is truer than history. While reporters remain true to stubborn facts, "the historian and the ethnologist must report only what has taken place, only what they can establish as facts; the novelist, meanwhile, has access to a higher truth, beyond the truth of details."[61]

Hence, to provide the poetic dimension in Niemcewicz's composite portrait of Kosciuszko, a poem is presented entitled *Widmo* (*The Spectre of War*) with its first lines a *cri de Coeur* – an impassioned and urgent plea to *Kosciuszko, Kosciuszko* to come to the rescue. It appears to be a reliving of the Battle of Maciejowice inspired by and addressed to the Polish General at a time once again when Niemcewicz found himself in a state of extreme emotional and physical duress after the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813. The defeat marked a period of uncertainty for Niemcewicz, one in which Prince Józef Poniatowski had valiantly fought and died. The latter's funeral became the subject of one of Niemcewicz's most moving poems, *Pogrzeb Xięcia Józefa Poniatowskiego. Pienie żałobne*. It belongs to a small group of poems that includes *Elegia* written in the aftermath of the Second Partition in 1793 and the poems *Smutki* written during his days in the St. Petersburg prison. Each of the poems is marked by a profound sense of defeat and despair.[62]

[59] W. Zajewski, *Czy historycy piszą prawdę?*, Kraków 2015, p. 7.

[60] Ibidem, p. 8.

[61] T. Todorov, *The Morals of History*, transl. A. Waters, Minneapolis 1995, p. 88.

[62] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Smutki Juljana Ursyna Niemcewicza w więzieniu moskiewskiem pisane do przyjaciela*, z rękop. wyd. L. Kamykowski, Lublin–Warszawa 1932 (written in March, 1795). One of the poems is entitled „Elegy on the Battle of Maciejowice and the journey of the Polish prisoners to Petersburg." In addition Part V of the Ursynów-Dumania is devoted to an account of the poet's life, the Battle of Maciejowice (J.U. Niemcewicz, *Dziennik 1839–1841*, op. cit., p. 39–50). Rusinowa also makes reference to an unpublished longer poem in which Niemcewicz presents himself as Kosciuszko's comrade; the first line reads: "Ach słodszem było

After the devastating Russian campaign of 1812 and the Russian army's renewed presence in Warsaw, Niemcewicz's suppressed misgivings about the fate of the fatherland came to pervade his thoughts, convincing him that Poland was bound to submit to Russian control. He noted the wheel of fortune turning full circle as the ghosts of traitors of battles past came to haunt the Polish present: "Już wojska francuzkie i nieprzyjacielskie stoją blizko siebie nad Salą rzeką, dzień brzemienny jest przeznaczeniem Europy. Wojsko wielkie moskiewskie przeszło już Elbe, niestety! Dwa najpiękniejsze w tym wojsku pułki jezdne są złożone z Polaków, pod dowództwem niepoczciwego Witta i Szczęsnego Potockiego."[63] His worst fears seem to be realized in his recognition of Polish soldiers in Russian uniforms among the Russian detachments as the ghosts of his enemies from Targowica.

In his *Notebooks*, Niemcewicz rarely draws attention directly to himself; his emotional states are conveyed as a rule as the tone of his immediate reactions to the individuals and events he is describing. His own concerns are inevitably bound up with the welfare of Poland, but at this point he cannot repress the dark premonitions that overpower him: "Tysiące niespokojności i smutków trapią duszę moją. Od lat 21 nie znam, jak obywatelskie dręczenia, obozy, bitwy, rany, więzienia, wygnania, podróże morskie i dziś najsroższe zawody!"[64]

All his fears came to a head in October, 1813 in relating details from the final battle of Prince Józef at Leipzig:

> Przechodziło wojsko przez most na Elster postawiony: dał Napoleon rozkaz pułkownikowi Monfort, żeby go minami opatrzył i jak wojsko całe przejdzie, wysadził. Pułkownik wypełnienie rozkazu tego zdał na kaprala. Ten, nieroztropny, gdy jeszcze wojsko polskie trzymające odwód znaczną cześć artylerji francuzkiej była na drugiej stronie, miny podpalił i most wysadził.[65]

The lack of concern for the welfare of the Polish regiment cost the Poles dearly and became symbolic of the fate of the Polish soldiers fighting for the glory of Napoleon.

Niemcewicz was a profound realist capable of adapting to the ever swiftly changing fortunes of his country. After the defeat of Napoleon and the death of Prince Józef at Leipzig Niemcewicz gave himself over to his fears for Poland's future. He had been suffering from a protracted illness during the siege

w obcej krainie wygnanie..." as well as the poem from 1837 entitled "Strofy, mające być śpiewane, gdzie Kościuszko po rewolucyi przemieszkiwał" (p. 184).

[63] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki Juljana Ursyna Niemcewicza*, t. 1: *1809–1813*; t. 2: *1813–1820*, Poznań 1871, tu: t. 2, p. 24.

[64] Ibidem, t. 2, p. 26.

[65] Ibidem, t. 2, p. 30.

of Dresden, what he referred to as a "nervous fever."[66] These fears found expression in the poem entitled *Widmo*.[67] Written in 1814, Niemcewicz's nightmarish vision draws upon his experience at the Battle of Maciejowice. In *Widmo* the poet calls out to Kosciuszko and warns him of terrible portents upon the approach of a squadron Russian Cossacks: the day of reckoning is at hand for the beleaguered Polish nation, while subtly adverting to Kosciuszko's abandonment of Niemcewicz himself and the nation:

> Kościuszko, Kościuszko, gdzież Twój zapał mężny/ Wiedzie ciebie i twoich mężów uzbrojonych?
> Patrzaj, jak w chmurach skrwawionych/ Ten okrąg słońca potężny
> Zachodzi strasznie (...).[68]

The Polish general's presence, his steadfastness and unmatched valor on the battlefield are sorely missed. The bloody sunset is portentous, filling the poet with dread as he warns the commander, or the commander's ghost, of the imminent approach of the enemy's overwhelming forces:

> (...) Czy słyszysz to wycie/ Wilków żarłocznych, te w obłokach zwartych,
> Jak gdyby hufców zażartych/ Po tarczach okropnych bicie?
> Widzisz jak tłumem Moskale,/ Gdzie się Wisły marszczą fale (...).[69]

The vivid folk-like imagery of the bloodthirsty wolves creates a fantastic vibrancy in arousing the poet's dread premonitions for his country reverberating in the war chant of the hostile hordes of Cossack cavalrymen, the hated and feared Muscovites, about to overrun the Polish heartland.

> Czy słyszysz te koni rżenie,/ Groźbę żołnierstwa zuchwałą:
> Rozorzemy Polskę całą,/ Wnet dozna Polak zemsty naszej broni.
> Kopyta zadońskich koni/ Tratować będą po ich orłach białych.
> Ukarzmy wolnych i śmiałych,/ Niechaj ich jarzmo żelazne uciska,
> Obróćmy w popiół odwieczne siedliska.[70]

The symbolic imagery of white eagles being trampled upon by the hooves of Cossack steeds is a crushing blow to national pride. The reference to ashes in

[66] I. Rusinowa, *Pana Juliana przypadki życia: Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, 1797–1841*, Warszawa 1999, p. 134.

[67] W. Bolecki, *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz* [in:] *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, t. 2, eds. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, Warszawa 1994, s. 413–415. *Widmo* was first published [in:] B. Gubrynowicz, *Wiersz o Kościuszce J. Ursyna Niemcewicza*, „Pamiętnik Literacki" 1924, nr 25.

[68] W. Bolecki, op. cit., p. 413.

[69] Ibidem, p. 414.

[70] Ibidem.

the poem's final line captures Niemcewicz's ominous vision of an utterly destroyed Poland. In 1814 Niemcewicz's meditations on the future of Poland, similar to those after Polish defeats in 1793 and 1794, involved his personal fate. His poignant yet powerful appeal to Kosciuszko is a desperate invocation for the General to reappear as the nation's savior and it reflects not only his concern for the nation in 1814, but also his insecurity and the need for the protection of a comrade, father-figure, and semi-divine apparition. Niemcewicz, having played a major role in promoting anti-Russian and pro-Napoleon propaganda in the verse *Iskra* (1807) and the pamphlet *Listy litewskie* (1812), had much to fear upon the demise of the Duchy of Warsaw. In addition to his fear of being imprisoned, he was also concerned about the russification of Poland, its army, culture and society. In order to salvage what he could of Polish sovereignty he was forced to come to terms with his anti-Russian sentiments. Adam Czartoryski urged him to declare his support for the Russian regime now in place in Warsaw to preserve at least a modicum of independence. In his notebook he conceded to political realities: "Ojczyzna pierwszym jest naszym celem i lepiej ją przyjąć z nienawistnej moskiewskiej ręki, niż nie mieć jej wcale."[71]

V

In Samuel Johnson words, "the writer of an epitaph should not be considered as saying nothing but what is strictly true. Allowance must be made for some degree of exaggerated praise. In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath."[72] Niemcewicz's extensive posthumous praise of Kosciuszko is a moving tribute to the historical figure whose departure from life allowed the Polish poet to filter out his feelings of bitterness of abandonment. In her introduction to *Dzienniki z lat 1820–1828* (2012) in which *Pochwała Kościuszki* was first published, Rusinowa characterizes him as "poet, writer of comedies, collector, a publisher of documents and memoirs, one knowledgeable of poetry including the Latin poets, an admirer of Horace and a novelist" and as "an engaging personality, the first Pole to become an American citizen."[73] Of the eulogy, Niemcewicz's coming to terms with Kosciuszko, Rusinowa characterizes it as "patetyczna i podniosła mowa Niemcewicz na cześć Naczelnika."[74]

One does not speak ill of the dead. Kosciuszko's death on October 15, 1817 brought an end to the ill feelings harbored by Niemcewicz for his long-estranged comrade. The old ghost of his being abandoned is clearly felt by its

[71] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki Juljana Ursyna Niemcewicza*, op. cit., t. 2, p. 9.
[72] J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, London, 1986, p. 191.
[73] I. Rusinowa, op. cit., p. 7.
[74] Ibidem, p. 14.

absence in Niemcewicz's immediate response to Kosciuszko's passing found in his diary entry from that month.

> Przy końcu października r.b. smutną z Szwajcarji odebraliśmy wiadomość o zejściu z tego świata Tadeusza Kościuszki w mieście Solor. Był to wielki miłośnik wolności, cnotliwy, odważny, wytrzymały, tęgość duszy stawała mu za wiele świetnych przymiotów. Ja, com go w czasie rewolucji 1794 w bojach pod Maciejowicej, w niewoli, w podrożach, nie odstępował, przyświadczyć to mogę.[75]

Niemcewicz writes in restrained and respectful terms, affirming their common bond, emphasizing that he never left his side, never abandoned him, a fact to which he bears witness.

Niemcewicz was called upon by his contemporaries as the living Pole who best knew Kosciuszko to honor his remains with a funeral speech at services held at Holy Cross Church in Warsaw on November 14, 1817. Niemcewicz's diary entry describes the ceremony thus:

> Odprawiła się [msza – J.J.J.] przecież z okazałością przy licznym tłumie obywateli i rycerstwa. Wielki kniaź [Konstantin – J.J.J.] nie kazał mu czynić żadnych wojskowych honorów, a chcąc obchód cały uczynić prywatnym, nie zaproszono rządu, nie chcący walecznem mężowi wyrządziła... Zaproszony byłem od obywateli do mienia pogrzebowej mowy. Gdym zaczął, wielki kniaź co mógł, to czynił, żeby mię zmieszać. Nic udało mu się atoli. Polacy dość byli z słów moich zadowoleni, wielki kniaź parschał, ilem razy wspomniał o wolności, drudzy Moskale darować mi nie mogli, żem z wdzięcznością wspomniał Imperatora Pawła, Kościuszki i nas wszystkich oswobodziciela, nie lubił bowiem, iż przypominano, że go udusili.[76]

Niemcewicz is unable to restrain himself from taking jibes at the reigning Russian tyrant and his cohorts.

Among the unpublished papers in the Niemcewicz archive at Liberty Hall in New Jersey is a translation of Niemcewicz's funeral speech, untitled, with the following brief introduction: „Written in Warsaw, December 8th, 1817. [sic!] This oration was held by Kosciuszko's companion in arms, the famous Polish writer Mr. Von Niemcewicz, at Kosciuszko's funeral which took place on November 14th."[77]

The funeral speech served Niemcewicz as a model for his later *Praise of Kosciuszko*. In Niemcewicz's words, Kosciuszko evokes memories both heartening and sad as "model of civic virtue, ardent patriotism unflinching prowess

[75] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki Juljana Ursyna Niemcewicza*, op. cit., t. 2, p. 349.

[76] Ibidem, t. 2, p. 350.

[77] J.U. Niemcewicz, [*Funeral Speech*] December 8th, 1817, Unpublished manuscript, Liberty Hall Archive, Elizabeth, NJ [n.d.].

in battle... manly endurance in misfortune... with the integrity of the ancient Romans, the inseparable companion of true merit!" He characterizes Kosciuszko with the epithet "noble despair" a mindset, representative of the nation as a whole, forged by the affronts to the nation, the embittered trials it suffered and continues to suffer, and the extreme misfortune of the nation in its loss of independence. Niemcewicz sees Kosciuszko as the embodiment of the nation's fate yet with a character shaped and hardened by misfortune. "The oppressed fatherland took the sword and placed it in the hands of Kosciuszko." Yet Niemcewicz, bound to the realities of the present, interpolates his words of praise with reference to the current state of national affairs, acknowledging "the bonds which unite us with a sister nation, the unity of leadership, our gratitude to Alexander."[78] Niemcewicz concludes with a reference to "the goodness of [Kosciuszko's – J.J.J.] heart, the purity of his soul, hoping that a monument as modest as he was in his lifetime be raised "without inscription, just your name.[79]" The monument marked the return of his ashes to Poland and his final resting place, the Kopiec Kosciuszki in Krakow, the culmination of the cult that had been developing since his days as Commander-in-chief of the Insurrection, in no small part aided by Niemcewicz.

The oration presents a generalized portrait of the man that stifles any lingering resentment Niemcwicz may have felt for Kosciuszko. The latter is characterized by noble despair. His portrait of the hero accords with his own program of creating models of patriotism and civic virtue for Polish youth, one of his primary ambitions of the Congress Kingdom period. It also yokes Kosciuszko to the *realpolitik* of the "sister Nations" and Niemcewicz's own compromising attitude toward Alexander I. Niemcewicz's monarchism and collaboration with Russia was far removed from Kosciuszko's staunch republicanism and egalitarianism. Kosciuszko's unwillingness to compromise his ideals can be seen in his rejection of cooperation with Napoleon on subservient terms, leading to his life-long self-imposed exile in Switzerland. He never returned to Poland after the Battle of Maciejowice.

VI

Stanislaw Staszic, Niemcewicz's predecessor as President of the Society of the Friends of Learning (TPN), announced on 1 Feb. 1818 a competition to honor the memory of Kosciuszko upon his recent death. Kosciuszko had enjoyed widespread popularity, taking on legendary status. In the Congress Kingdom, Niemcewicz was, among the members of the TPN, considered most knowledgeable of Kosciuszko's life and widely esteemed as his friend and

[78] Ibidem, p. 3.
[79] Ibidem, p. 5.

confidant. Niemcewicz's private disappointment created difficulties for him and delayed his progress in writing about Kosciuszko. Eventually he chose to write in a manner that was to serve as a patriotic ideal for the younger generation. Niemcewicz was able to objectify his "historical" appreciation of Kosciuszko by imposing upon himself classical restraint in his expression and by suppressing any unpleasant facts of their personal relationship while emphasizing the selfless virtues and universal qualities of Kosciuszko, rendering thereby his individual traits into a sublime ideal.

Niemcewicz was extremely well positioned to write such a eulogy since he understood Kosciuszko and the nature of his experiences so well. Both came from neighboring estates in the Lithuanian east; both had been educated in the cult of Polish patriotism in the Cadets Corpus, where modern values and a modern way of thinking were nurtured; both benefitted from the patronage of Stanislaw August and Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, founders of the school. Both had extensive experience in Europe (Kosciuszko primarily in France) and in America where they each spent approximately eight years of their lives. The two were united on the battlefield and in captivity and journeyed together from Russia to the United States. They were also distant relatives.[80]

In maintaining his critical distance, aided by the passage of time, by Kosciuszko's own passing and by adding color and verve to his portrait, Niemcewicz created a moving classical tribute to his comrade. He referred to Plutarch as a source for the moral evaluation of the life of an outstanding man of state, identifying Timolean (411–337 BC) as a personal ideal of Kosciuszko's. He employed a strategy of outlining episodes from his life to highlight his sacrifice of personal interests to the greater good of the nation. Kosciuszko, Niemcewicz informs us, had been born under the sign of Mars; his fate had been bound up with battlefields on two continents. While Niemcewicz had been trained as a public servant and writer, Kosciuszko's experience at the Cadets Corpus focused on military science as well as patriotic service to the state. In Paris, while continuing his military studies, Kosciuszko nurtured a continued enthusiasm for enlightenment values, remaining relatively immune to the worldly temptations relished by Niemcewicz.

Niemcewicz threads together the fragments of the life of an individual who is one with his times and the events he helped to shape. The objective traits he ascribes to the Polish hero are imbued with a sheen of glory. Kosciuszko comes to embody the attributes of the hero that gave meaning, flesh and blood, to the nation's ideal: a portrait both collective and individual that was an idealized construction emanating from the realities of his life. Niemcewicz highlights values that ring true for Kosciuszko, his nation and the times. He captures Enlightenment values that subordinate personal interest and inspire

[80] B. Szyndler, *Tadeusz Kościuszko...*, op. cit., p. 19.

self-sacrifice for the greater good. Such a priority on martial valor embodied in Kosciuszko survives into the present as a key element of Polish identity. Bound up with the noblest Polish traditions, the national values of perseverance, stalwartness, and dedication, are harnessed to inculcate such ideals at a time of repression, and censorship. Kosciuszko, for Niemcewicz, possessed the type of character and personal values needed to preserve the Polish nation intact, to preserve Polish identity, *polskość*, in a difficult historical epoch. For Niemcewicz, biographer of Washington, Kosciuszko, likewise a member of Cincinnatus, embodied Classical Roman virtue as a defender of the Fatherland and a farmer.[81]

A primary motif recurring in the Funeral Speech and in the *Pochwała* is "noble despair." As indicated above, Niemcewicz reveals very little of Kosciuszko's private life and thoughts in the *Diaries*. The most remarkable confidence the General shared with his adjutant upon their release from prison recorded in the *American Diaries* was Kosciuszko's attempts at suicide. Niemcewicz deftly appropriates this confidence, this apparent weakness, to dignify the man and the nation, to ennoble Kosciuszko by making him fearless on the battlefield by being immune to the fear of death, by indicating how his desire to die fortified him as a soldier, forging for him a magic shield before the enemy's onslaught. Niemcewicz characterizes him as

> A man of greatness who brought glory and dignity [to the nation – J.J.J.], his noble despair in giving the ultimate to his nation at a time of utter tragedy redeems it, whose own blood and those of his compatriots sanctified the gravesite, wiping away all stains of ignominy brought about by loss of nationhood. Such a man deserves the praise and gratitude of his fellow Poles.[82]

Niemcewicz transforms Kosciuszko into a very modern type of hero, "a hero of despair," whose uncorrupted manners, disdain for power, and great soul left him with no fear of death. Despair, the "bezsilna rozpacz" of the nation, becomes a weapon to avenge the ravages of Polish history. Nobility of despair is strengthened by the sufferings of exile; however far from the native land, "w sercu jedną zawsze nosząc i żałość, i rozpacz."[83] Long years of suffering temper the soul and steel the flesh: "Rozpacz rozwinęła powstania chorągiew; rozpacz uzbroiła wieśniaka."[84]

[81] For a discussion of Niemcewicz as historian of Washington and the relationship between Kosciuszko and Washington, see B. Oleksowicz, *Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza pochwała Tadeusza Kościuszki* [in:] *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, pisarz, historyk, świadek historii*, ed. J. Wójcicki, Warszawa 2002, p. 78 ff, and for an extensive account of *Pochwała*, see J. Dihm, op. cit., p. 366 ff.

[82] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Dziennik z lat 1820–1828*, ed. I. Rusinowa, A. Krupa, Warszawa 2012, p. 316.

[83] Ibidem, p. 317.

[84] Ibidem, p. 318.

Niemcewicz affirms that America – where for six (sic!) years Kosciuszko served as a soldier and citizen – taught Kosciuszko about human possibilities, inculcated in him scorn for the powerful. It taught him that in the battle between blind pride and oppressed innocence, "a manly nation" must make its decision "to be free, so free it must be."[85]

Niemcewicz informs us that Kosciuszko, flushed with victory, returned home "sadder than ever." His idea of homeland outrageously enhanced by his long years in America, filled him with dread, realizing how helpless he was to be of service to his nation, sadder than ever before in spite of victory, in his return to Siechnowice.[86]

Niemcewicz's theme of noble despair continues apace as he recounts the enemy's ruthless occasions of violence done to Polish sovereignty. He condemns the "niewojenny Stanisław August" for choosing to save his crown in cowardly exchange for the loss of the May 3rd Constitution: "Któż wyrazi rozpacz wodzów, żołnierzy, gdy rozkaz ten przyszedł do obozów [in 1792 – J.J.J.]. Smutek, czarną posępność i taki będzie koniec, mówił Kościuszko, sprawie tak ważnej, jak świętej."[87] Kosciuszko is seen "fighting to victory or death" with victory hardly an option. "Our Kosciuszko" crying out in regret and despair, is compared to Marius standing over the ruins of Carthage, the imaginary Rome becoming a "sanctuary for the nieutolony wódz."[88]

For Niemcewicz, Kosciuszko and the nation as a whole knew of its fate, knew it had to die, but preferred to die with dignity. Kosciuszko was a natural leader, a man of universal respect, perseverance, boldness, *nieskazitelność*, "a man for and of the times, one who was incapable of rousing jealousy, a man of modesty who won general admiration, a man all could trust, a man with whom commoner and nobleman alike could bear their fate in a period of despair."[89]

VII

Niemcewicz noted the obstacles the Tsarist government imposed on expressions of Polish patriotism and national feeling, of which the eulogy of Kosciuszko was a most eloquent expression:

> Niemałe zakłopotanie, co czytać, gdy wszystko, co szlachetne i patriotyczne jest zakazanym. I tak pochwały Kościuszki, generała Dąbrowskiego, Stanisława

[85] Ibidem, p. 319–320.
[86] Ibidem, p. 321.
[87] Ibidem, p. 324.
[88] Ibidem, p. 325.
[89] Ibidem, p. 326.

> Potockiego wygotowane od dawna, że wspominają o szlachetnych zapasach naszych, czytanymi być nie mogą. Zakazano na teatrze grać sztuk z historii polskiej wyjętych; zakazano pamiętników o dawnej Polsce.[90]

His final diary entry was recorded on May 20, 1841; on the following day, 21 May, he died. After the funeral services in the Church of the Assumption held on May 24, the remains of the poet were taken to Montmorency, where he was buried not alongside Kosciuszko, but another eminent general, Kniaziewicz. Funeral orations were given by his biographer and longtime friend, Prince Adam J. Czartoryski and his nephew Karol Niemcewicz. Among the visitors attending the burial ceremony were dozens of Polish emigrants. Onto his gravesite was placed a handful of soil from his native land taken from the Kopiec Kosciuszki in Krakow, creating an eternal bond between the two Polish patriots.[91]

By suppressing some painful facts of his personal relationship with Kosciuszko, Niemcewicz made a significant contribution to the cult of the hero of the 1794 Insurrection. In his writings about Kosciuszko after the latter's death, he managed to allay the bitter feeling of his abandonment, never failing to affirm, in a manner that suggests deep, strong sentiments, that he had been Kosciuszko's inseparable companion, ever at his side, ever rendering service to the man and his great unrealized mission. At the same time the painful fact of abandonment continues to appear in Niemcewicz's posthumously published writings. The history of the publication of Niemcewicz's vast output is an extremely complex one. How he managed to preserve his manuscripts given the vicissitudes of the times and his extremely peripatetic life remains a mystery. The vast majority of his countless letters remains unpublished. Yet in the course of the 175 years since his death, new publications of his works continue to appear, and to an extent, reveal him to be one of the most knowledgeable and intriguing individuals of his generation, one whose life experiences embody a great deal of the modern Polish experience.

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[90] J.U. Niemcewicz, *Dziennik 1839–1841*, op. cit., p. 143–144.

[91] Ibidem, p. 7.

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