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LIETUVOS

Didžioji Kunigaikštystė

Parlamentarizmas. Konstitucija. Visuomenė



LIETUVOS ISTORIJOS INSTITUTAS

XVIII

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Parlamentarizmas. Konstitucija. Visuomenė

Sudarytoja

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# THE POLITICAL WRITERS LOUIS-ANTOINE CARACCIOLI, SIMON LINGUET AND JOHN LIND, AND THE 1772 PARTITION OF THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH: A STEP TOWARDS AWARENESS OF A COMMON EUROPEAN MEMBERSHIP?

**ARNAUD PARENT**

Mykolas Romeris University

‘The righteous man is a citizen of the world, and there is no event occurring in a foreign country that doesn’t affect him.’<sup>1</sup>

Marquis de Caraccioli (1719–1803)

*Abstract* In 1772, the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth occurred. A few outraged English and French pamphleteers grabbed a pen to defend its cause. The same year, John Lind released his *Letters Concerning the Present State of Poland*. In 1773, Simon Linguet published his *Considérations politiques et philosophiques, sur les affaires présentes du Nord, et plus particulièrement sur celles de Pologne*. In 1775, the Marquis de Caraccioli released *La Pologne telle qu’elle a été, telle qu’elle est, telle qu’elle sera*.

This article aims at defining how these authors’ reactions to the first dismemberment of the Commonwealth contributed to the nascence of public opinion in the last quarter of the 18th century, thus accelerating the advent of a shared sentiment of European membership. The study is intended as a contribution to our knowledge of the reception in European public opinion of the partition of Poland-Lithuania. The article encompasses: I) the emergence of public opinion in 18th-century Britain and France; II) Caraccioli, Linguet and Lind: three different personalities devoted to the same cause; III) combating prejudices: Restoring the truth on serfdom in the Commonwealth, and the dissidents affair; IV) ensuring support for a king struggling alone against hostile neighbouring powers.

**Keywords:** public opinion, European awareness, dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 18th century.

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1 ‘L’homme juste est citoyen du monde, & il n’arrive point de révolution dans l’étendue des Empires, qu’il n’y prenne part’, Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne telle qu’elle a été, telle qu’elle est, telle qu’elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, 1775, Préface.



## Introduction

On 5 August 1772, Russia, Prussia and Austria signed a treaty to annex some of the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>2</sup> On 18 September, the three powers made a joint declaration to the Commonwealth and Europe to announce their intentions. This agreement was ratified by the Sejm<sup>3</sup> on 30 September 1773. Consequently, the Polish-Lithuanian Republic lost almost a third of its territory, and more than a third of its population.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, people in Western Europe did not know much and showed little interest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,<sup>5</sup> which was usually considered as an un-governable entity, since there was no efficient executive power. Nevertheless, the 1772 partition (which was subsequently followed by the 1793 and 1795 partitions) aroused condemnation. In England, Edmund Burke considered the dismemberment 'the first very great breach in the modern political system of Europe',<sup>6</sup> and King George III viewed it as 'subversive', and bad news for Europe.<sup>7</sup> As for the philosopher David Hume, he remarked sadly that 'the two most civilized nations, the English and the French, should be on the decline and the Barbarians, the Goths and the Vandals of Germany and Russia, should be rising in power and renown.'<sup>8</sup>

France had closer ties with the Commonwealth. Not only because two French noblewomen became queen of Poland,<sup>9</sup> and Marie Leszczyńska, the queen of France, was of Polish descent, but also because France doggedly struggled to put its candidates on the throne of Poland (which was an elective monarchy). François Louis de Bourbon won the election in 1697, and Stanisław Leszczyński the one in 1733. In previous years, France had sent army officers to assist the Bar Confederates<sup>10</sup>

2 Piotr Ugniewski, L'attitude de la France lors du premier partage de la Pologne, in: *Annales de l'académie polonaise des sciences à Paris*, 2009, vol. 11, p. 229, 238.

3 The Sejm was the Commonwealth's parliament, composed of three estates: the king, the senate and the knights, the latter being composed of envoys elected by the *sejmiks* (local assemblies). The Sejm met once a year for four weeks, with possible extensions. See: Adam Zamoyski, *The Last King of Poland*, London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 2020, p. 567; Richard Butterwick, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Light and Flame*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, p. 389.

4 Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

5 Or 'Commonwealth of the Two Nations', or 'Republic of the Two nations'.

6 *Annual Register for the Year 1772*, p. 2. Quoted by: Anna Plassart, Edmund Burke, Poland, and the Commonwealth of Europe, in: *Historical Journal*, 2020, vol. 63 (4), p. 901.

7 Adam Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

8 David Horn, *Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and European Diplomacy*, London: G. G. Harrap Limited, 1930, p. 18–19. Quoted by: Adam Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

9 Louise-Marie de Gonzague (1611–1667) married King Władisław IV (1595–1648) in 1645, and then King Jan II Kazimierz (1609–1672) in 1649. Marie-Casimire-Louise de la Grange d'Arquien (1641–1716) married the future King of Poland Jan III Sobieski (1629–1693) in 1665.

10 A confederacy (*konfederacja*) was a league of nobles (*szlachta*), formed as a sign of protest, or as a provincial assembly, or in the case of a national emergency (in which case, it would be composed of two branches, one Polish and one Lithuanian). It could be either 'around the king', or in opposition to him. See: Adam Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 464; Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

who were fighting against the armies of the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski and Russia, but with no success, despite some feats of arms, confirming the Polish adage that ‘God is too high and France is too far.’<sup>11</sup> Reflecting this maxim, Louis XV wrote in 1773: ‘At a distance of five hundred leagues, it is difficult to help Poland. I wish it had remained intact, but it is a wish I can only formulate.’<sup>12</sup> Anyway, French opinion was shocked, as can be read in a 1774 memorandum destined for the new King Louis XVI, written by the foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes: ‘Indignant Europe sees with astonishment [...] three powers of diverse and opposing interests [...] strip a state of its richest domains.’ The minister concludes: ‘If force is a right, if convenience is a title, what will the security of States henceforth be? If the political banditry continues, peace will soon be nothing more than an arena open to infidelity and betrayal.’<sup>13</sup>

Actually, King Stanislaw Augustus had appealed to Britain and, especially, France for help (the latter, according to the Treaty of Oliwa in 1660, was committed to ensuring the territorial integrity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), but to no avail. He only succeeded in influencing the coverage of the partition in the *Gazette de France*.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, a few English and French pamphleteers took up the pen to defend the cause of the Commonwealth. In 1772, the Briton John Lind released the first edition of his *Letters Concerning the Present State of Poland*.<sup>15</sup> The following year, the Frenchman Simon Linguet published his *Considérations politiques et philosophiques, sur les affaires présentes du Nord, et plus particulièrement sur celles de Pologne* (Historical and Philosophical Considerations on the Present Affairs in the North, and more Especially on those of Poland). In 1775, the Marquis de Caraccioli released his *La Pologne telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera* (Poland as it Was, as it Is, as it will Be). These authors, appealing to the reason and feelings of their readers about the tragic events that afflicted the Commonwealth, contributed to the emergence of a common European consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

The purpose of our study is to define how the scandal caused by the first partition of Poland-Lithuania enhanced the maturity of public opinion in the 18th century and favoured the rise of a shared European membership.<sup>17</sup> We hope

11 ‘Bóg jest zbyt wysoko, a Francja zbyt daleko.’

12 Piotr Ugniewski, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

13 Louis de Ségur, *Politique des cabinets de l'Europe*, t. III, Paris: Alexis Eymery, 1825, p. 146.

14 Piotr Ugniewski, *op. cit.*, p. 229; Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

15 In those times, the term ‘Poland’ could either be used to designate Poland, or the whole Commonwealth.

16 It is worth noting that several newspapers presented laudatory reviews of these works. Caraccioli's book was reviewed in: *Mercure de France*, April 1775, p. 77–85; *Esprit des journaux*, March 1775, tome III, p. 421–424; *Journal de Politique et de littérature*, n. second, 15 January, tome premier, p. 193–195. Lind's book was reviewed in *Monthly Review*, December–July 1773, vol. XLVIII, p. 234–235; *Critical Review: Or annals of Literature*, vol. 34, p. 469–470, 1772.

17 For an anthology of 18th-century texts about the idea of Europe, see: Rotraud von Kulessa, Castriona Seth (ed.), *The Idea of Europe, Enlightenment Perspectives*, Open Books publishers, 2017.



Reading and commenting on information in groups contributed to the rise of public opinion. Engraving, second half of 18th century, France, © Bibliothèque nationale.

the study will be a useful contribution to the reception of knowledge about the dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic in European public opinion. We will thereafter consider: I) the emergence of public opinion in 18th-century Britain and France; II) Caraccioli, Linguet and Lind: three different personalities devoted to the same cause; III) combating prejudices: the truth on serfdom in the Commonwealth, and the dissident affair; IV) ensuring support for a king struggling alone against hostile neighbouring powers.

### I. The emergence of public opinion in 18th-century Britain and France

An interest by the public on state policy, characteristic of the Enlightenment, emerged in England at the end of the 17th century, and around the middle of the 18th century in France, where the term 'public opinion' (*opinion publique*) was coined. The idea was that public opinion has to be based on reason, and draw its moral force from the inviolable privacy of individual conscience. Additionally, this public opinion is based on 'the assumptions of its rationality and universality', as Harvey Chisick observed,<sup>18</sup> and it became 'the authoritative judgement of a collective conscience, the ruling of a tribunal to which even the state was subject'<sup>19</sup> for Anthony La Vopa.

This public opinion was still in its infancy, since the ability to form one's own opinion depended on accessibility to the 'media' and places of sociability

<sup>18</sup> Harvey Chisick, Public Opinion and Political Culture in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century, in: *English Historical Review*, February 2002, Vol. 117, n. 470, p. 49, 55; Anthony La Vopa, The Birth of Public Opinion, in: *Wilson Quarterly*, Winter, 1991, vol. 15, n. 1, p. 48, 55.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.



Frequencing coffee-houses was a major contribution to the advance of public opinion. Interior of a London coffee-house. Drawing, England, 17th century.

(in French *les lieux de sociabilité*). Access was limited, not only because most European citizens lacked reading skills, but also because the acquisition of books and periodicals, and frequenting coffee-houses, salons, theatres or masonic lodges, was possible only for those who could afford them.<sup>20</sup> That is, public opinion was formed mainly by a small educated and propertied elite, reflecting bourgeois ideas.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, in those times secrecy was regarded as inherent in statecraft, which citizens were not supposed to know. Even in the United Kingdom, a liberal country, until at least the 1770s newspapers could be prosecuted for publishing about the debates in the House of Commons.<sup>22</sup> This way of governing further limited access to information on public affairs.

That said, more and more readers were interested in public matters, giving greater power to the emerging 'fourth estate'. In 1755, a member of the French Academy declared to his fellow 'immortals': '[Now that] each citizen is able to speak to the entire nation through the medium of print, men of letters are to a

20 Harvey Chisick, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

21 It explains why the Netherlands-based French-language newspaper *Gazette de Leyde*, one of the most widespread in Europe, in 1785 had a circulation of just over 4,000. See: Anthony La Vopa, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 52. For instance, Louis XVI's finance minister Jacques Necker caused a shock when he released in 1781 his *Account to the King* (*Compte-rendu au roi*), which disclosed the financial situation of France, and contributed to his dismissal the same year.

dispersed public what the orators of Rome and Athens were in the midst of an assembled public.<sup>23</sup> State leaders quickly understood the importance of the press, as we see, for instance, with the *Gazette de France*, which depended on the French Foreign Ministry,<sup>24</sup> or with the foreign minister Count Vergennes, who used it to favour a French alliance with the North American colonies that rose up against Britain.<sup>25</sup> Actually, such independent thinking on public issues dramatically contributed to sparking not only the American but also the French Revolution, as Burke observed in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790): ‘Writers, especially when they act in a body, and with one direction, have great influence on the public mind.’<sup>26</sup> Having assessed the growing importance of public opinion, let us make an overview of the lives of Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, Simon Linguet and John Lind, and the reasons that led them to take up the pen to counteract prejudices against the Commonwealth, and to improve its image.

## II. Caraccioli, Linguet and Lind: three different personalities devoted to the same cause

The Marquis Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli was born in 1719 in Paris into a family of Neapolitan origin. After growing up in the city of Le Mans, in 1739 the young Caraccioli joined the Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri (*congregatio oratorium*), and began to give lectures in their school in Vendôme. He then travelled to Rome (where he was received by popes Benedict XIV and Clement XIII), the Holy Roman Empire, and Poland, where he met General Waclaw Rzewuski (1706–1779), who hired him to educate his children. Returning to France, the marquis lived for several years in Tours and Paris. He died in 1803.

The witty marquis wrote numerous books of an original tone, including *Conversation avec soi-même* (Conversation with Oneself, 1753), *Le livre de quatre couleurs* (The Four-Colour Book, 1757) and *L’Europe française* (French Europe, 1786). Using the knowledge he gained living in the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, in addition to his aforementioned ‘Poland as it Was, as it Is, as it Will Be’ (1775), Caraccioli wrote *Lettres à une illustre morte, décédée en Pologne depuis peu de temps* (Letter to an Illustrious Dead Woman, Recently Deceased in Poland, 1771) and *La vie du comte Wenceslas Rzewuski* (The Life of Count Rzewuski, 1782). Some of his books were translated into German, Polish, Russian and Spanish. The marquis was a subtle observer of society throughout his life, and portrayed his

23 *Ibid.*, p. 52–53.

24 Piotr Ugniewski, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

25 Keith Baker, *Politique et opinion publique sous l’Ancien Régime*, in: *Annales*, 42<sup>e</sup> année, n. 1, 1987, p. 60.

26 Quoted by Harvey Chisick, *op. cit.*, p. 60.



Establishment of the new Philosophy. Our Cradle was a Coffee-house. Engraving, France, 18th century, © Bibliothèque nationale.

contemporaries with gracious and kind humour. At a time when it was fashionable to proclaim oneself a deist or an atheist, Caraccioli, while accepting some Enlightenment ideas, remained a convinced Catholic. For this reason, *philosophes* such as Voltaire, Grimm<sup>27</sup> and La Harpe<sup>28</sup> were particularly critical of the marquis' works.

27 Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm (1723–1807), a German critic living in Paris, who played a significant role in the spread of French culture in Europe.

28 Jean-François de la Harpe (1739–1803), a Swiss playwright and literary critic living in Paris.

Simon Linguet was born in 1736 in Reims. We know that he worked as a secretary to the Count Palatine of Zweibrücken, and travelled with him to Poland for some reason. Nevertheless, because of an unclear quarrel about a stolen horse, Linguet quickly returned alone to France. He then began his career as a lawyer, and sat as a member of the Paris parliament, where he supported the king's policies. In 1773, after the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Linguet wrote his *Considérations politiques et philosophiques, sur les affaires présentes du Nord, et plus particulièrement sur celles de Pologne* (*Historical and Philosophical Considerations on the Present Affairs in the North, and More Especially on those of Poland*). In 1788, he was commissioned to write in



Simon Linguet (1736–1794), French lawyer and journalist.

support of the reforms carried out by the French government. Linguet published various books: his *Théorie des lois civiles* (*Theory of Civil Laws*, 1767) met with great success. In 1777, in order to share his ideas on various subjects, he founded his own newspaper, *Annales politiques et littéraires* (it came out until 1792), which enjoyed huge success, even counting members of the royal family among its fervent readers.<sup>29</sup> During the French Revolution, in his *Annales*, Linguet stressed the importance of 'opinion publique', and endeavoured to define it.<sup>30</sup>

Independent-minded and intransigent, Linguet had numerous enemies, namely the *philosophes* he criticised in his work *Le fanatisme des philosophes* (1764). During the French Revolution, in 1791, at the National Constituent Assembly, he did not hesitate to defend the cause of rebellious black slaves on the island of Santo Domingo. As Harold Greaves observed about Linguet: 'Although he clearly wished for fame, he was at once too honest and too proud to soften his words by one jot in order to win her favour.'<sup>31</sup> Because in previous years he had

29 Marc Meurisse, Quelques vues de Linguet, d'après les *Annales* (1777–1784), in: *Revue du Nord*, t. 54, n. 212, January–March 1972, p. 5–6.

30 Simon Linguet, Réflexions sur l'opinion publique, & sur le respect qui lui est dû, in: *Annales politiques, civiles, et littéraires du dix-huitième siècle*, tome seizième, 1790, p. 296–313.

31 Harold Greaves, The Political Ideas of Linguet, in: *Economica*, March 1930, n. 28, p. 40.

asserted that bread was noxious nourishment, Linguet was guillotined in 1794, for such an opinion was considered by revolutionaries as contempt for the people.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Linguet was definitely an unconventional thinker. As Henry Vyverberg noted, 'Few meritorious writers of the French Enlightenment period have been more neglected than Linguet.'<sup>33</sup>

John Lind, who was born in 1737, graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, in 1761. The son of a vicar, he took deacon's orders in the Anglican Church in around 1758, and was sent as a chaplain to the British Embassy in Constantinople. He then renounced his clerical position and went to Warsaw to be tutor to Prince Stanislaw Poniatowski (1754–1833), the nephew of King Stanislaw Augustus. In 1767, the king appointed Lind head of the Corps of Cadets in Warsaw,<sup>34</sup> where he implemented pedagogy inspired by Locke and Rousseau,<sup>35</sup> and awarded him the title of privy councilor. At the beginning of 1772, after granting Lind a pension, Stanislaw sent him to London, with a recommendation for the renowned judge and politician Lord Mansfield (1705–1793) to advocate the cause of Poland-Lithuania among British opinion. There, Lind published various pamphlets and a book, *Letters Concerning the Present State of Poland* (1772). In 1776, he was called to the Bar. When he died in 1781, his widow received from Stanislaw Augustus each year the sum of 150 ducats, always accompanied by a pleasant letter. Lind was a close friend of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832); and the member of parliament Lord Grenville (1712–1770) praised his literary style. In addition to the above-mentioned *Letters*, he wrote works such as *Remarks on the Principal Acts of the Thirteenth Parliament of Great Britain* (1775), and *Three Letters to Dr. Price, Containing Remarks on his Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776).<sup>36</sup>

Glancing at the three essayists' motivations, we can see that Simon Linguet wanted to alert European countries on how the Commonwealth's partition would affect them: 'What is happening today in the North holds the attention of the whole of Europe: there is no nation which doesn't have an interest, either present or future, in the event which must decide the fate of the Republic of Poland.'<sup>37</sup> Linguet appeals to the 'humanity' and 'soul' of his readers: 'A more pressing interest, that of humanity, makes all sensitive souls desire that a successful change

32 Marc Meurisse, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

33 Henry Vyverberg, Limits of Nonconformity in the Enlightenment: The Case of Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet, in: *French Historical Studies*, vol. 6, No 4 (autumn, 1970), p. 475.

34 Akademia Szlachecka Korpusu Kadetów Jego Królewskiej Mości i Rzeczypospolitej (The Nobles Academy of the Corps of Cadets of His Royal Majesty and the Commonwealth).

35 Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

36 Jean Fabre, *Stanislas Auguste Poniatowski et l'Europe des lumières*, Paris: Ophrys, 1984, p. 278, 360–361, 400; Adam Zamojski, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

37 Simon Linguet, *Considérations politiques et philosophiques, sur les affaires présentes du Nord, et plus particulièrement sur celles de Pologne*, Londres, 1773, p. 1.



of Government will compensate the Poles for the loss of a part of their territory from which they are threatened.<sup>38</sup>

The Marquis de Caraccioli, in the preface to his *La Pologne, telle qu'elle a été ...*, explains his commitment, which is essentially based on his feelings for the inhabitants of the Commonwealth: 'This spectacle touches me more keenly than my own woes, because my heart is in their midst, and like them I impatiently await the happy moment which will give them back their properties and their freedom.'<sup>39</sup> In his view, the partition concerned the whole of Europe, since:

Poland is now a vast theatre stage showing the most touching scene. And there is no European who should regard himself as a mere spectator of it. The kingdoms, due to politics and commerce, have long become one and the same family. The righteous man is a citizen of the world, and there is no event occurring in a foreign country that doesn't affect him.<sup>40</sup>

In John Lind's opinion, the partition is a subject 'which deservedly engages the attention of Europe.' As he writes, he has waited long 'perhaps too long – under the hope, that an abler pen would have taken up this important cause. But as no champion seemed willing to step forth in defence of the injured and oppressed, he ventured on the task.' As we saw earlier, Lind was charged by Stanisław Augustus to defend the cause of the Commonwealth in the United Kingdom,<sup>41</sup> and, like Caraccioli, he lived for a few years in Poland-Lithuania, and his involvement is foremost an affective one. Hence, he is first motivated to defend the country by 'a love of justice, and respect for an amiable character, pity for a suffering people, indignation at the most atrocious acts of cruelty and perfidy.'<sup>42</sup> Lind especially draws attention to the danger posed by the Russia, Austria and Prussia to other countries:

the cause of Poland is now become the cause of all Europe; and especially of the states of the second order; they ought to feel, that nothing but an immediate and firm league can secure them against the tyranny

<sup>38</sup> Simon Linguet, *op. cit.*, p. 1–2.

<sup>39</sup> Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne, telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, troisième partie, p. 48–49.

<sup>40</sup> Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *op. cit.*, Préface.

<sup>41</sup> About Stanisław Augustus' propaganda abroad, see: Piotr Ugniewski, Propaganda Stanisława Augusta wobec francuskiej opinii publicznej, in: Elżbieta Wichrowska (ed.) *W stronę Francji... Z problemów literatury i kultury polskiego Oświecenia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007, p. 63–70; Piotr Ugniewski, Szkaradny występ królobójstwa w międzynarodowej propagandzie Stanisława Augusta, in: *Przegląd Historyczny*, 2004, t. XCV, z. 3, p. 327–347.

<sup>42</sup> John Lind, *Letters Concerning the Present State of Poland*, 2nd ed., London: printed for T. Payne, 1773, Advertisement written on 19 April 1773.

and ambition of three such powers, who are evidently preparing yokes for them all.<sup>43</sup>

And for this reason, Lind appeals to the hearts and minds of his countrymen, since he is persuaded ‘that he should find an advocate in the bosom of every British reader, and ‘the humanity and generosity of the British nation feel themselves interested’ in the cause he pleads.<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting that Lind does not mention his close relationship with the king, possibly because he considers that in so doing he can better defend the Commonwealth’s cause.

That being said, the French historian Jean Fabre noted that Lind may have been directly influenced by Stanislaw Augustus, and possibly received some help from the French diplomat Joseph-Mathias Gerard de Rayneval (1736–1812), who was the French consul in Danzig before the partition. Besides, still according to the historian, since Linguet’s work *Historical and philosophical considerations...* was released in 1773 and 1774 in London, Lind possibly had a part in it.<sup>45</sup>

### III. Combating prejudices: restoring the truth on serfdom in the Commonwealth and the dissidents’ affair

An unedifying aspect of the Commonwealth was serfdom. On the eve of the first partition, Poland-Lithuania was home to 12 million inhabitants, with serfs making up three quarters.<sup>46</sup> With peasants overburdened by labour services and low land yields, the Commonwealth’s agriculture appeared backward in the eyes of enlightened West Europeans. In this respect, before the partition in 1771, Caraccioli himself bitterly admitted that:

one can say on this subject that if the Polish Republic had abolished servitude, it would have had many more resources in all the crises it experienced. The Lords would have suffered from it, but the State would have taken benefit. The Serfs who make up the multitude would have taken up arms, and there is much more emulation and zeal in a

43 John Lind, *op. cit.*, letter III written on 24 December 1772, p. 61.

44 *Ibid.*, Advertisement.

45 Jean Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 644, note 314. The French historian considered that the author referred to as ‘Théophile Lindsey’, who wrote *The Polish Partition, illustrated in Seven Dialogues* (London, 1773) and *Les droits des trois puissances alliées sur plusieurs provinces de la République de Pologne* (Londres, 1774), was actually John Lind himself, Lindsey being a play on words with Lind-say or Lind-see, *op. cit.*, p. 644, note 317.

46 François Rosset, Dominique Triaire, *Jean Potocki*, Paris: Flammarion, 2004, p. 16. After the first partition, 78% of peasants lived on a noble-owned property, 13% on Crown property, and 9% on Church-owned property. See: Michel Marty, *Voyageurs français en Pologne*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004, p. 183.

free people than in an enslaved people. So each one defends his home, jeopardising their own life, whereas vassalage extinguishes valour and dazes souls.<sup>47</sup>

That said, the marquis observed that the serf in the Commonwealth was less miserable than the peasants of Italy and other places, since his lord gave him enough to live on and clothe himself.<sup>48</sup> Four years later, in 1775, after the first partition, with some territories of the Republic having been incorporated into neighbouring states, the marquis feared the living conditions of the peasants would deteriorate:

the serfs, who have no idea about taxes, will have great difficulty getting used to paying them. They do not know what bad times are, and they will get to know them. They will depend on circumstances, whereas they did not always depend on them. When they were assured of having their food, their clothing and their bed secured, they only took care of their work. But now they will be afraid of running out of the things most necessary for life. If, besides, habit is second nature, as everyone knows, it is impossible that they will not regret their first state.<sup>49</sup>

Linguet, having heard that it was more advantageous to the Commonwealth to have its lands cultivated by 'slave peasants' than by free ones, disagrees with this statement. On this point, he evokes the case of Count Andrzej Zamoyski,<sup>50</sup> who freed his serfs on his estates at Bierun in the Palatinate of Plock. Their emancipation was done 'with all the prudence and wisdom of a man who knows men', observes the essayist. Actually, each peasant received a field, and paid his lord an annual sum proportionate to the value of the land. Besides, the count while freeing the serfs, made them support each other:<sup>51</sup>

All the freed peasants in each village oversaw one another. They all had a particular interest in preventing drunkenness and laziness from entering among them. Each of them, fearing to pay for the one who

47 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne, telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, 1775, seconde partie, p. 65.

48 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *Lettres à une illustre morte, décédée en Pologne depuis peu de temps*, Paris: chez Bailly, 1771, p. 265.

49 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne, telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, 1775, troisième partie, p. 36.

50 Count Andrzej Zamoyski (1716–1792), a former grand chancellor of Poland. In 1776, he issued a progressive code, *Zbiór praw sądowych*, which granted peasants their personal liberty and placed them under state protection, but it was rejected by the Sejm in 1780.

51 Simon Linguet, *op. cit.*, p. 85–87.



would not work, did everything in his power to excite by his example the less laborious [...].<sup>52</sup>

In addition, Linguet reports that the count established money prizes for the peasants who made the most beautiful canvas and to the women who spun the finest linen or did other useful work. The prizes are awarded every year on St Joseph's Day. Emancipated peasants were no longer recognisable, since they were better dressed and their dwellings were more comfortable. Equally, schools were opened.<sup>53</sup> Not only the peasants benefitted from such emancipation, but so did Count Zamoyski, since:

His peasants, content with their fate, bless him unceasingly. They call him their father, and he regards them as his children. He retained some drudgery rights, but the peasants anticipate his orders, and the work is often done before it is ordered. His hay is mown, his woods are cut the very instant they need to be cut.<sup>54</sup>

Hence, the count was richer and happier, 'for there is no happiness which is comparable to that of making people happy, and no power comparable to that which derives from gratitude.'<sup>55</sup>

That said, Linguet acknowledges that enfranchisement is not yet feasible or suitable in remote and underserved areas, which lack the economic opportunities to sell the products of the land. Nevertheless, he was confident that when peace was restored in the country, the improvement of lines of communication (namely in Podolia and Volhynia) would permit the emancipation of the serfs to be extended to other areas.<sup>56</sup>

As for Lind, who painfully deplored serfdom, he admits it was not easy, and maybe not even possible, to abolish it definitively.<sup>57</sup> But like Linguet, he welcomes the improvement made in the situation of the serfs, thanks to which 'this useful body of men are reinstated in the rights of nature.' He also mentions a law, which, although not raising the serf to the rank of citizen, since he remains attached to the glebe, nonetheless secures his life and 'restores to him, at least, the rights of a man.'

In a similar manner to serfdom, the status of dissidents, that is, the non-Catholic inhabitants of the Commonwealth, was a matter for indignation by foreign observers. The issue was raised in October 1766 in the Sejm, when

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88–89.

<sup>57</sup> John Lind, *op. cit.*, letter I written in Dantzig on 22 September 1772, p. 37.



Another illustration of the Commonwealth being shared like a cake: *The Polish Plumb-Cake*. ‘Thy Kingdom Stanislus, is now at stake. To four such stomachs, it’s a mere plumb-cake.’ Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II, Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine II of Russia, Louis XV of France, Stanislaw II of Poland-Lithuania and ashamed Mustafa III of Turkey are present. Strangely enough, France is represented among the co-sharers, even though it did not take part in the partition. Notice the devil hiding under the table pointing his finger towards Frederick II. Engraving by John Lodge (1735–1796) 1774.

the Russian ambassador Prince Repnin (1734–1801), at the request of the Empress Catherine of Russia, demanded legislation enfranchising dissidents. Strong hostility to this demand arose through the country. The Bishop of Krakow, Kajetan Soltyk, wrote open letters to Catholic monarchs in Europe to complain about the Russian pressure. On 4 September, Repnin received new instructions for enhancing dissidents' full enfranchisement, including seats for them in the Senate.<sup>58</sup> In the meantime, Russian troops were sent into the estates of the bishops of Wilno and Krakow to put pressure on them. On top of that, Repnin threatened Stanislaw with armed intervention and dethronement if he did not obey the Russian demands. But tenacity paid off, the opponents to Russia got the upper hand, and the Sejm passed a law confirming in perpetuity all the limitations on the dissidents.<sup>59</sup>

The way the dissident affair was reported and treated abroad outraged Caraccioli and Linguet. Caraccioli was amazed by the English and the Danes, who vigorously supported the 'dissidents,' whereas in his opinion they treated Catholics in their countries in a way they did not want the Protestants to be treated in the Commonwealth.<sup>60</sup> This opinion was shared by Linguet, who stood up to show the unfairness of the charges against the Republic:

The Poles are accused of being superstitious and fanatical. But their conduct towards dissidents does not prove that they are. They only did what the wisest governments in Europe do. Do the English, the Dutch, the Swedes, and that part of Germany which follows the Augsburg Confession, admit in the Council of the nation people who profess the Roman religion? Doesn't the Empress of the Russians require ministers and Senators to adhere to orthodox faith? So why should the Poles be required to do what the politics and constant use reprove in other countries?<sup>61</sup>

For Linguet, the dissident question was nothing but a means to create divisions within the country, to gain and secure influence in the Republic.<sup>62</sup> The lawyer explains how the concept of 'humanity' was twisted, becoming a pretext to intervene in another country's internal affairs:

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58 'Senate', the upper chamber of the Sejm, presided over by the monarch, who named senators for life (until 1775); originally a governing body, it had become powerless by the 18th century. See: Adam Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 467; Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

59 Adam Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 144–146, 151.

60 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *Lettres à une illustre morte, décédée en Pologne depuis peu de temps*, Paris: chez Bailly, 1771, p. 288.

61 Simon Linguet, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

However unjust men may be, they blush for the injustices they have committed. Hence the care they almost always take to hide them under some deceptive veils which dim their features and make them less odious. The Russians disguise theirs from the Poles by dressing it in the appearance of humanity. In the beginning they appeared in Poland, arms in hand, only as the defenders of a section of the Citizens oppressed by intolerance, who had begged their protection. Protectors in appearance of the Dissidents, the Russians soon indeed became oppressors of the Republic.<sup>63</sup>

Quite interestingly, Linguet states the necessity to connect the right to interfere with moral principles.

If we reflect carefully on the conduct of the Russians in the dissidents' affair, we cannot help asking them on which moral and political principle they felt they had the right to rule Polish people. How they acquire the right to interfere in the internal administration of Poland, and if it was the love of humanity that grounded their acts. How to combine this feeling with the disastrous effects it produced? Never will the love for mankind bring trouble and desolation to more than a million families.<sup>64</sup>

Linguet delivered his own concept of what religious tolerance should be:

It is a received maxim in politics that in all countries there must be a dominant religion and that the rights of citizens only belong to those who profess it. Then, because there is no more rivalry between the different religions, there can be no longer any trouble or confusion in the state. The full enjoyment of tolerance and of all the rights of the citizen is the only thing that can reasonably demand those who do not follow its worship. And it is also the only thing that the sound government's policy can grant them.

To prove that this concept is fully applicable, Linguet gives the example of religious tolerance in Britain:

In England a simple soldier, a simple Customs clerk professes the Anglican Religion. But a Presbyterian, an Anabaptist, a Jew, even a Roman Catholic, may safely work as a farmer, merchant or manufacturer, he

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7, 88.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.





*Picture of Europe for July 1772.* Satirical British engraving stressing the decrease in the power of Great Britain resulting from the partitions.

can own houses, land, vessels. He is protected, defended by law, just like the Anglican. Like him, he is honoured and considered in Society. This is how Tolerance becomes useful to the state without ever being able to be harmful to it.<sup>65</sup>

Contrary to Caraccioli and Linguet, Lind has to address Protestant readers, for whom the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a component of the Catholic bloc, a bloc likely to endanger their liberties and whose inhabitants were perceived as persecutors.<sup>66</sup> For Lind, if Catherine II was the one who engaged the courts of London, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Berlin in the dissident cause,<sup>67</sup> the affair was a plan formed by Frederick II, who actually did not want the dissidents to get new rights in the Commonwealth. Indeed, the pressures endured by the dissidents in the Commonwealth were beneficial for the Kingdom of Prussia, since refugees could be enlisted and submit to taxes. Lind unveiled the *double-jeu* played by Frederick: while his representative in the Commonwealth demanded an improvement in the lot of the dissidents, his government gave secret assurances to the bishops according to which the

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15–16.

<sup>66</sup> William Fiddian Reddaway, Great Britain and Poland 1762–1772, in: *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1934, vol. 4, n. 3, p. 225–226.

<sup>67</sup> John Lind, *op. cit.*, letter II written in Dantzic on 1 October 1771, p. 96.

King of Prussia 'would not be offended' should little or no regard be paid to the dissidents. Also, Prussia having 'contributed by his artifices to draw the Poles into this snare, and excited the Russian ambassador, demeaned himself so that Russia was held sole responsible for the whole affair.'<sup>68</sup>

#### IV. Ensuring support for a king struggling alone with hostile neighbouring powers

Although French intelligence considered the Polish king a puppet of Russia,<sup>69</sup> and the *philosophes* showed contempt for him, the three essayists came to his defence. Linguet recaps what the Commonwealth owed Stanislaw: 'Abuses extirpated by him from the administration<sup>70</sup> of justice, order and economy restored to finances, useful projects, talents and crafts encouraged, all this gave Poland a glimpse of a happy future.' For these reasons, the sovereign king won 'the esteem and praise' of his fellow citizens. Linguet reminds us how uneasy the situation of the monarch was, since 'on the one hand he saw himself accused of ingratitude by the Russians, and on the other hand, accused by his compatriots of having sacrificed the freedom of his nation to his ambition.'<sup>71</sup>

As for Caraccioli, after having humoristically described the lack of power of the sovereign ('We can say, seeing the King ruled by the Republic, that he is a small oak whose branches have the greatest extent'),<sup>72</sup> he asserts that whatever the situation of the Commonwealth may be, the king, since he is legitimately elected and has all the qualities to make an excellent king, must govern.<sup>73</sup> John Lind reinforces Caraccioli's view of Stanislaw: 'the man the most worthy of the throne.' Lind, for he knew the king personally, defends him the most convincingly. Firstly, he recalls that Stanislaw benefited from an education which had been 'directed on a plan the most liberal and manly' and had travelled to all the courts of Europe where he left 'the most favourable impressions behind him'. In addition to his education, the king had qualities such as 'a nervous eloquence', and

68 *Ibid.*, p. 98–109.

69 By contrast, Frederick II considered Stanislaw as 'French in mind and body', as he wrote to Solms, his chargé d'affaires in St Petersburg. See: Piotr Ugniewski, L'attitude de la France lors du premier partage de la Pologne, in: *Annales de l'académie polonaise des sciences à Paris*, 2009, vol. 11, 240.

70 For an in-depth study on reforms implemented, see: Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, Liudas Glemža, Valdas Rakutis, Robertas Jurgaitis, Eduardas Brusokas, *Modernios administracijos tapimas Lietuvoje: valstybės institucijų raida 1764–1794 metais*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2014.

71 Simon Linguet, *op. cit.*, p. 23–24, 28.

72 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *Lettres à une illustre morte, décédée en Pologne depuis peu de temps*, Paris: chez Bailly, 1771, p. 23.

73 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne, telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, 1775, troisième partie, p. 10–11.

‘a thorough knowledge’ of the laws of the Commonwealth and of the courts of Europe. And what is most important for Lind, Stanislaw had ‘enlarged and just ideas of the rights of mankind, and the ends for which superior power is lodged in the hands of the few’, which would ‘render himself the most agreeable to his fellow-citizens, and his neighbours.’<sup>74</sup>

To better defend the king, the essayist depicts the difficulties the sovereign faced. He reminds us that even before the dismemberment, the neighbouring powers, under the pretext of securing their own borders, would send troops into the Commonwealth. In addition, pretending to secure the freedom of elections and the rights of the different classes of citizens, they took upon themselves the title of guarantors of the Commonwealth.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, Lind draws attention to the edict published on 29 October 1771 obliging the Republic’s inhabitants to accept payment for forage, provisions, corn and horses destined for Frederick’s army. Moreover, Prussian commissaries used money which was worth exactly one third of its nominal value, as well as ducats copied from Dutch ones, 17 per cent inferior to the originals. Not only was such fraudulent money used to buy corn and forage to supply the Prussian army in Poland, but the Poles themselves were later compelled to repurchase the costly corn for their daily subsistence. And they had to do this solely using good coins, since Prussian commissaries refused to accept the coins they had themselves used to purchase goods from the peasants. By the same token, every town and village had to furnish a certain number of marriageable girls.<sup>76</sup>

What is more, had the neighbouring powers really wanted to help stabilise the country, as they say, they would have withdrawn their troops from the Commonwealth, eased the meeting of the Sejm, and checked its regularity, observes Lind.<sup>77</sup> ‘What then would you say to a foreign power, who, beholding with complacency the ancient form of government in England, should endeavor to force you to re-establish it, such as it was under the houses of Lancaster, York, Tudor, or Stuart?’<sup>78</sup>

Caraccioli, too, bemoans the repeated hostile intrusions into the Commonwealth, stressing how costly they were in human lives: ‘Foreign nations, by making frequent incursions there, only populated it with corpses.’<sup>79</sup> In Caraccioli’s opinion, the problem was that, basically, neighbouring powers

74 John Lind, *op. cit.*, letter I written in Dantzic on 22 September 1772, p. 14–15.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 11–12.

76 *Ibid.*, letter II written in Dantzic on 1 October 1771, p. 113–115. Today, we know that these heinous practices were essential to the survival of Prussia. See: Richard Butterwick, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

77 *Ibid.*, letter III written in Brussels on 24 December 1772, p. 126.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

79 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *La Pologne, telle qu’elle a été, telle qu’elle est, telle qu’elle sera*, Varsovie, Poitiers: chez Michel Vincent Chevrier, 1775, première partie, p. 11.



the Commonwealth, Caraccioli remains confident about its future. Since the partitioning powers will not always be united, and will compete against each other, Poland-Lithuania will rise again:<sup>82</sup>

Anyone who has read the history of Poland has noticed how this vast Kingdom more than once had to deal with enemies that had shared it in some way [...] However, these storms dissipated, and the moment came when Poland took back what it had lost.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

In the minds of the Marquis de Caraccioli, Simon Linguet and John Lind, the 1772 partition was definitely an event that appealed to the awareness of every European: ‘There is no European who should regard himself as a mere spectator of it’ (Caraccioli); ‘What is happening today in the North holds the attention of the whole of Europe’ (Linguet); ‘The cause of Poland has now become the cause of all Europe’ (Lind). The writings of the three essayists paved the way to a sensitisation to the fate of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations that lived on in the following decades, especially in France, where numerous Poles and Lithuanians found refuge. The steady growth of the mass media in the later centuries would see the development of such shared empathy among European countries, and, hence, in the world.

Ultimately, in the 20th century, Poland and Lithuania regained their independence, and the historians Emanuel Rostworowski (*Ostatni król Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa, 1966) and Adam Zamoyski (*The Last King of Poland*, London, 1992) contributed decisively to rehabilitating the image of King Stanisław Augustus Poniatowski. The regained statehood of Poland and Lithuania, after a long eclipse, reminds us that in history, unexpected reversals may always happen. And the combativeness of the Marquis de Caraccioli, Simon Linguet and John Lind, who appealed to the ‘humanity’ and ‘soul’ of public opinion to empathise with the fate of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, while remaining confident in its renaissance against all odds, proves that fighting for one’s ideals is worthwhile.

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82 Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *op. cit.*, p. 30–31.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 32–33.

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POLITIKOS RAŠYTOJAI LOUIS-ANTOINE'AS CARACCIOLIS,  
SIMONAS LINGUET, JOHNAS LINDAS APIE PIRMAJĄ LENKIJOS  
IR LIETUVOS VALSTYBĖS PADALIJIMĄ (1772 M.): ŽINGSNIS LINK  
BENDROS NARYSTĖS EUROPOJE?

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1772 m. įvyko pirmasis Abejų Tautų Respublikos padalijimas. Pasipiktinę keli prancūzų ir anglų pamfletistai griebėsi plunksnos, siekdami ginti naikinamą valstybę. Tais pačiais metais Johnas Lindas išleido savo *Letters concerning the present State of Poland*, o 1773 m. Simonas Linguetas – savo apmąstymus *Considérations politiques et philosophiques, sur les affaires présentes du Nord, et plus particulièrement sur celles de Pologne*. 1775 m. pasirodė markizo Louis-Antoine'o de Caracciolio veikalas *La Pologne telle qu'elle a été, telle qu'elle est, telle qu'elle sera*.

Straipsnyje keliamas tikslas nustatyti, kaip šių autorių darbuose išreikštas įsipareigojimas dėl Lenkijos ir Lietuvos Respublikos pirmojo padalijimo prisidėjo prie XVIII a. paskutinio ketvirčio viešosios nuomonės formavimosi, pagreitindamas Europos valstybių bendrumo ir narystės viename „politiniame kūne“ jausmo įsivyravimą. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama geriau pažinti, kaip Europos viešoji nuomonė priėmė Abiejų Tautų Respublikos padalijimą. Straipsnyje aptariami keturi problemos aspektai: nagrinėjamas viešosios nuomonės formavimasis XVIII a. Didžiojoje Britanijoje ir Prancūzijoje; pristatoma trijų skirtingų asmenybių – L.-A. Caracciolio, S. Linguet ir J. Lindo – veikla ir pažiūros; aptariamas nagrinėjamuose veikaluose iškeltos kovos su prietarais aspektas – tiesos apie vergvaldžius atkūrimas Respublikoje ir disidentų byla bei analizuojamas paramos užtikrinimas karaliui, vienam kovojančiam su priešiškomis kaimyninėmis valstybėmis.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: viešoji nuomonė, europinis sąmoningumas, Abiejų Tautų Respublikos padalijimai, XVIII amžius.