

Europe of Free Nations.  
Idea of an Integrated Continent  
in Polish 19th Century Thought



*All nations belonging to the eternal alliance in Europe  
should be equally subject to the European laws.*

*The existence, independence and property of each nation  
will be a subject of the particular protection of European laws.*

W.B. Jastrzębowski

On the cover: Allegory of Europe  
[from:] *Dzieła Stanisława Staszica*, Warszawa, 1820

**Europe of Free Nations.  
Idea of an Integrated Continent  
in Polish 19th Century Thought**



The Sejm Exhibition  
10-21 May 2008

## Europe of Free Nations. Idea of an Integrated Continent in Polish 19th Century Thought

The turn of the 18th and 19th centuries saw a basic turnabout in the European philosophical and political thought. Under the influence of the Enlightenment idea the principle of the sovereignty of the monarch was replaced with the rule of the sovereignty of the people. Article 3 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 read that *the principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation*. The Constitution of the United States of America, written two years earlier, opened with the famed words, *We the people...*, and according to the French Constitution of 1791, the ruler was no longer the king of France, but the king of the French. Peoples and their states were becoming the subjects of international relations, and it was they, not the monarchs, who were to create the European order.

It was no accident that until the close of the 18th century, the best-known projects of the new order in the Continent were based on the assumption that all European structures would have the nature of the union of rulers. Crucial in this respect was the opinion of Kant who in 1795, in the essay *On Eternal Peace*, wrote that the future United States of Europe could only be a federation of republican states, that is based on a constitution that would ensure equal participation of all citizens in taking the most important decisions of the



state. The new way of thinking about free nations as about the subjects of the future European order was taking ever more space in the panorama of the political thought of the first half of the 19th century. In the atmosphere of intellectual revival dissertations were written with the word “European” in their titles, European committees and societies were established, while the awakening national independence movements called for European solidarity. Participants in ideological disputes referred to the conception of federation or united states of nations-peoples of Europe.

Polish politicians and political thinkers took part in the debate from the very beginning. That resulted both from the fact that in the construction of a federated Europe of free nations they saw a chance of regaining Poland's independence as well as from the possibility of referring to the worthy achievements of the Polish political thought of the earlier periods. Worth mentioning here are the Polish 15th and 16th century doctrine of the law of nations, the federal experience of the Commonwealth of Two Nations, the actually republican nature of the Polish monarchy with a special, “sovereign” position of the gentry in the state, and last but not least the Polish Constitution of 3rd May, 1791, with its declaration that *all power in civil Society should be derived from the will of the people*.

That glorious past, and especially the memory of the Polish-Lithuanian union as the free federation of *the free with the free and the equal with the equal*, the experience dramatically interrupted by the country's partitioning, lived on, often in an idealized form, in the texts by many Polish 19th century writers. This way the old political tradition became a part of the new European debate on the sovereignty of nations, on the

establishment of lasting peace, democratic order and on unification of free peoples. Also, it soon became one of the sources of the belief in Poland's special role in the history of Europe.

Therefore it is worth recounting here the most interesting Polish plans for a European order of that time. They were of a different nature as their authors represented different world views and backgrounds, they differed in education and they performed different political roles. At the same time, the texts presented here are not uniform in character: some are wholly dedicated to a specific “federation” proposal, others treat European unification as a secondary theme. Common to all the authors is their conviction that a new European order – no matter whether it is to be a result of political calculation, moral duty or pure philosophy – must have a nature of variously understood federation and may be built only by free nations. And each of these authors might sign the appeal by an anonymous feature writer who in 1838 wrote: *being Poles we want to be something more, let us be Europeans.*



The emblem elaborated by S. Buszczyński for a future European federation: a cross inscribed within the sun and a ring. The Latin motto reads *In will – unity. In unity – freedom. In freedom – salvation.*

**Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826)**, a scholar, philosopher, naturalist, political writer, priest; one of the most eminent representatives of the Polish Enlightenment.

Staszic expressed the idea of integrating European nations in his historic, philosophical and didactic poem *Ród ludzki* (1819-20, Human Race) and in the *Uwagi* (Comments) attached to it. The main concept of the poem and of the comments is the conviction that striving after the idea of association of nations is a natural direction of the civilisation development. Such an association, in Staszic's opinion, should guarantee protection of identity and own language of each nation. At the same time the association should have a common constitution, a common system of measures and a common currency, as well as its own military forces in order to protect Europe's frontiers. Staszic draws also attention to the fact that there were several attempts made in the European history to implement the idea of the association of nations, and they always ended in vain: from ancient Greeks through Roman emperors to German and French monarchs. In his opinion, only the initiative conceived in the Slavonic world could have a chance for success.



**Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński (1776-1853)**, a philosopher, mathematician, physicist, technician and inventor, he also worked in the area of natural sciences and economy; one of the leading representatives of the Polish messianic philosophy.

The philosophical system of Hoene-Wroński was an attempt to find a universal principle that organises all fields of science, which should lead to discovering the absolute truth.

His vision of a European federation was an element of this philosophical system. According to Hoene-Wroński, the federal system is the utmost stage in the development of the human society. In his opinion, the prerequisite for the construction of such European federation is the establishment of independent states based on a mature, i.e. able to express abstract notions, national language. Then, such states would enter regional confederations based upon the affinity of languages and national cultures. Finally, when the absolute truth is deeply rooted in people's minds, national states, while saving their autonomy, would begin to exist within the European community understood as an expression of a certain philosophical order. According to Wroński, this aim may be achieved by means of international congresses which would peacefully resolve controversial political issues.



**Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770-1861)**, a statesman and writer, prominent figure of the Polish emigration after the defeat of the November Uprising 1830-31.

Czartoryski addressed the issue of Europe's organization several times. As a Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia and a politician building anti-Napoleonic coalition he prepared a memorandum *O systemie politycznym, który winna stosować Rosja* (1803, On Political System to be Adopted by Russia) and an instruction for Novosilcov for talks in London in 1804. The memorandum and the instruction, although they were mainly documents of current politics, contained some remarks on the philosophy of politics, as well as specific proposals for European political order after the victory over



Napoleon. This new European order was to be based on the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, the constitution as a basis for the political system and the federation as a principle of integrated Europe. League of European states, dominated by Russia and England, was to include Republic of Poland in its pre-partition boundaries, united with Russia in a personal union. Nevertheless, Czartoryski's plan was rejected by the Russian emperor.

In his *Szkic o dyplomacji* (Essay on Diplomacy), written in 1824-28 and published in Paris and Marseille in 1830, Czartoryski – already in the opposition to the Russian emperor – looking for an equilibrium on the European continent and perceiving Russia as a main threat, refers to proposals of the King of France Henry IV Bourbon, supported by the English Queen Elisabeth I, whose aim was to establish European structures which would settle controversial issues of political and religious nature. In Czartoryski's opinion, England and France, as exemplary constitutional systems, should return to the old initiative. Czartoryski saw the construction of the European federal structure as a voluntary union of several small states which would have enjoyed a common leadership in foreign affairs, while leaving local matters to each country. He thought that a federal system respecting independence of member nations had a chance to embrace a wider part of Europe.



**Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski (1799-1882)**, a naturalist and eminent pedagogue.

Jastrzębowski believed that peace had the highest value for every human being. Impressed by the bloody battle of

Grochów in 1831 during the November Uprising he wrote *Traktat o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi. Konstytucja dla Europy* (1831, *Treatise on Eternal Alliance among Civilized Nations. The Constitution for Europe*). He thought that in order to achieve a permanent peace in Europe it is necessary that nations introduced and respected common legal norms which should be included in a European constitution. National laws were to be the guarantee for equal rights to all people composing a nation, which he understood as the community of language, while European laws were to be the guarantee for equal rights to all nations. National laws should be adopted by the Parliament, European laws by a congress consisting of all nations' representatives, elected in equal number by national Parliaments.

Furthermore, the European constitution determined competences and principles of the functioning of the authorities, sanctions for infringing legal norms, as well as fundamental rights and obligations of citizens. The union was to be open for all states, including non-European ones, which would accept commonly recognised principles. In his constitution Jastrzębowski included also a radical plan for disarmament and establishment of a defence coalition in the form of *an eternal alliance*, calling at the same time for the creation of the common European army. He promoted the idea of preparing young people to live in peace, tolerance and friendship between nations, called for the abolition of the death penalty. He wanted to change those national emblems which contained symbols of violence.

After the November Uprising Jastrzębowski's brochure was confiscated by Russian censorship as a forbidden print. Its second edition was published only in 1937 in the journal „*Polityka Narodów*” (Politics of Nations).

**Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855)**, a Romantic poet.

The tentative reconstruction of Adam Mickiewicz views on the future of Europe should start with reminding ideological foundations which, in his opinion, should form a basis for the European unity. According to Mickiewicz, they included: the Christian religion which he expected to be radically renewed, introducing the Christian morality into politics, particularly into international relations, as well as *national dogma*, i.e. idea of integrating Europe to promote its constituent nations.

The European unity was an aspiration inextricably linked to the restoration of independent Poland, *the messiah of nations*, which gave example with its martyrdom and truthfulness, as well as mobilised spiritual forces of Europe. Serving Europe and humanity meant serving Poland, and serving the Polish cause was serving freedom and universal equality.

The future Europe was to be a confederation modelled upon the Polish-Lithuanian union, but its construction would be possible only as a result of *a universal peoples' war*, a European-wide revolution which would destroy bondages and injustice of the Holy Alliance Europe. Basically, Mickiewicz didn't propose any details of the future political or economic system of Europe. He called his compatriots to join the struggle for a new Europe. In his opinion, nations released from the oppression would voluntarily integrate and establish peaceful cooperation within universal republican (con)federation.

Mickiewicz views on the European unity can be found in *Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (1832, Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrims), in his lectures on the Slavonic

literature given in the Collège de France, as well as in his journalist writing in „Pielgrzym Polski” (Polish Pilgrim) and then in „La Tribune des Peuples”.



**August Cieszkowski (1814-1894)**, a prominent philosopher of the Polish Romanticism, economist and social activist.

Philosophic dissertation *Ojciec-Nasz* (1848, Our Father) is Cieszkowski's *opus magnum* reflecting his historiosophy, religious views and programme of social reforms. In Cieszkowski's opinion, the prayer *Our Father* is a revelation of humanity's future, heralding a new age which would fulfil Christ teaching and establish – by way of evolution of political and social relations – the Kingdom of God on earth. This Kingdom, constituting the utmost stage in the social development, would mean transition of nations from *the state of nature to the state of the civilisation of societies, to the state of nations' citizenship, to the state of Peoples' Republic*. Kingdom of God on earth, i.e. republic of independent nations, by joining nations and states, would not deprive them of their individual national features or independent existence but would allow them a harmonious cooperation and eternal universal peace.

The political system in both individual states and the whole Kingdom of God would be based on the division of powers, with a single major difference – the Kingdom authorities would will be obligatory elected. Therefore, it would be necessary to establish the following supranational bodies: Central Government as the executive power, Universal Council of Humanity as the legislature and



Universal Tribunal of Nations, i.e. judiciary. Cieszkowski doesn't explain how elections would be conducted, however the Republic of Nations would be headed by one person – Father of the Earth.

Individual nations and the whole Kingdom of God would be organized in accordance with the principles of self-governance and autonomy, and every citizen would have the right and the obligation to participate in public matters. Such a political organization would allow to preserve citizens' and national freedom as well as the public order.



**Zygmunt Edwin Gordaszewski (1806-1862)**, a painter, writer, participant of the November Uprising 1830-31, emigrant.

Gordaszewski published his brochure *Powszechna federacja wolnych państw* (Universal Federation of Free States) in March 1848, impressed by the outbreak of the Spring of Nations in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. He hoped these revolutionary events would result in a new political order in Europe, seen by him as a universal federation of free states. The basic assumption was recognition of the right of each nation to independent existence.

Gordaszewski proposed to establish a two-level federation. The lower one would be formed by three regional federations: of Latin, German and Slavonic nations, each of them being obliged to organise in three-year intervals its own congresses that would solve political aspects of the federation functioning as well as problems connected with trade, since the main goal of regional federations would be promoting

trade among member states. The upper level was to be a federation of all European states. Its main body would be a general congress meeting in sessions every ten years. Each country would be entitled to have three representatives both in the general and regional congresses – two representing the nation and one representing the government. The general congress would enjoy the right to take decisions binding all member states.



**Karol Libelt (1807-1875)**, a philosopher and aesthethician, writer, social and political activist, participant of the November Uprising 1830-31.

In the work *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej* (1845, Self-power of Mind and Features of the Slavonic Philosophy), perceived nowadays as his most important text, he argued that the philosophy and Polish literature of that time aimed at creating an original Slavonic philosophy. This was, in his opinion, *the philosophy of action*, a real action referring to the imagination, harmony with nature and unity of matter and spirituality as opposed to *the philosophy of reason*, i.e. rationalist idealism. Writing about a mutual relation between nations and mankind, he stood against hegemony of one nationality over another and underlined the principle of equal rights. He forecast future Christianization of politics and integration of the mankind in federal and democratic forms. In his opinion, such an integration would be possible when *nations become independent* and states *become individual* according to the national principle. Libelt, just like many other Polish philosophers of that time, sought redress for the injustice done

to the Polish nation by *restitution of its homeland in whole*, underlining that it was a condition for the peace and order in Europe. His *Projekt manifestu do narodów słowiańskich* (Draft proclamation to Slavonic nations) should be examined in this context. In this draft, Libelt proposed Slavonic federation based on the cultural affinity, harmonious cooperation and respect for each nationality.



**Stanisław Gabriel Worcell (1799-1857)**, a revolutionary, social and political writer.

Worcell was a partisan of the utopian socialism which he combined with the mysticism based on evangelical ideas of social equality. In his dissertation *O własności* (1854, On Ownership) he presented vision of an ideal society of the future, in which the collective ownership was to replace the private one. This concept was linked with the idea of national liberation.

Impressed by revolutionary events during the Spring of Nations, Worcell wrote the text *Polska – Węgry* (Poland – Hungary) published in instalments in „Demokrata Polski” (Polish Democrat) in 1849. In this work, he foresaw building of a European federation composed of regional unions of independent nations. There were three political systems to come into existence in Europe: west-south with France, Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, central with Germany and possibly Scandinavia and north-east centred around Poland and reaching from the Baltic till the Black Sea. In his opinion, establishing a Polish-Hungarian-Romanian-Vlach federation was necessary to ensure the peace and order in Europe. He

perceived federations as unions whose aim was to solve conflicts and to *speak unanimously in external relations* without infringing national sovereignty and identity.



**Stefan Buszczyński (1821-1892)**, a historian, political writer and journalist, independence activist.

In his dissertation *Upadek Europy* (1867, Collapse of Europe), Buszczyński strongly criticised the European political system, materialism of the contemporary culture and collapse of spiritual values. He opposed European crisis to an ideal vision of the brotherly union of independent nations. This work arose interest among French and German intellectualists of that time. In 1916 the second edition was published with the aim to prepare basis for the construction of post-war order in Europe.

According to Buszczyński, the basis for this new European order should be nation, which as an independent, intrinsic political whole creates so called ethnopolis (Gr. *éthnos* – nation and *politeia* – state) existing within its historic, *inherent* boundaries. Ethnopolis related through their origin and culture should integrate into so called fundamental cenopolis (Gr. *koinós* – common), and then – into tribal cenopolis on the basis of alliances and agreements. It is worth mentioning that one of the ten fundamental cenopolis listed by Buszczyński was to be the Polish cenopolis embracing territories of the former Republic of Poland, Silesia and Ducal Prussia.

Buszczyński presented a project of the ethnopolis and cenopolis political system. He proposed that cenopolitic Council, composed of the representatives of all ethnopolis,



should prepare a set of principles regulating relations between them, which would then be approved by an assembly of representatives from all nations constituting cenopolis.

There should be five alliance associations of a higher level, i.e. tribal cenopolis, including three powerful ones in Europe: Latin cenopolis, Germanic cenopolis and Slavonic-Turan alliance. Such an order could ensure a real equilibrium in Europe, as well as the permanent and universal peace.




**Bolesław Limanowski (1835-1935)**, a socialist, historian, sociologist, journalist.

One of the main threads of the Limanowski work was, apart from the socialism, the issue of nation and mutual relations between the nation and the state. He argued that all societies evolved in a natural way towards the socialism and that the nation was the highest stage of the society development. He recognised common history, religion, language, writing, art and particularly state as nation-integrating factors. Regaining of independence by the Polish nation was, in his opinion, a historical necessity.


Although Limanowski did not elaborate any detailed project of a united Europe, he presented a concept for the fundamental change of European relations according to the principle of equal rights for all nations. In his dissertation *Naród i państwo* (1906, Nation and State) he assumed that nations having equal rights should integrate in political and economic unions they recognized as the best suitable for them. Universal suffrage should form a basis for the new

order. Limanowski foresaw establishment of a European federation modelled upon the Swiss one. Common parliament would decide on general matters of the union and the highest tribunal would settle disputes among member states. Executive power would be authorized to enforce decisions taken by the parliament and the tribunal. Such a union would make a war in Europe *unnecessary and impossible*. Moreover, republican and democratic Europe cooperating within the federation would also allow to eliminate economic fight *concentrated* – as he wrote – on *border customs chambers*. Then state frontiers would also lose their previous significance.






During the Slavonic Congress in Prague in 1848, two of its Polish participants, Antoni Zygmunt Helcel and Jerzy Lubomirski, presented **a plan for an Austrian-Slavonic union** which would include Slavonic peoples in the Austrian Empire. The aim of the proposed union, based on the principle of equality of its members, was to ensure independence of the Slavonic peoples, their territories and constitutional systems. Hungarians were invited to join in, envisaged was also an alliance with Tyrol and the German part of Styria.



The proclamation of the **Representative Committee of the Union of Polish Emigration** (which led the Union in the years 1866-1871), dated 29th November 1866, stated that the aim of the Polish refugees was the struggle for independence carried out in association with other subjugated peoples, for example the Slavs, and also with the peoples of Hungary and Romania; opposition to the imperialist idea of Panslavism; and the unification for the sake of universal alliance. Their ultimate aim was a federation of European nations.



**Józef Hauke-Bosak**, general, commander in the January Insurrection, a Pole by choice, took in exile an active part in the work of the League of Peace and Freedom (1867) which gathered together the radical European intelligentsia. Although the League spread pacifist slogans, Hauke-Bosak justified the necessity of war for liberation of nations (and the

restoration of the republican Poland) in order to win permanent peace. At successive congresses of the League, he called for building a republican federation of free European countries as the United States of Europe. He also believed that once an independent Poland was rebuilt, the only obstacle to the union between Russia and Europe would disappear.



The **Groups of the Polish People**, which withdrew from the Polish Democratic Society, adhered to a utopian socialist programme where an important place was given to the question of the recovery of Poland's independence and to the universal good, described as *European Republic*. In the 1850s, Zenon Świątosławski established in London an organization called **Lud Polski – Gromada Rewolucyjna Londyn** (Polish People – Revolutionary Bunch London) which adhered to a radical social programme combined with a plan for struggle for independence. It anticipated that once Poland recovered her independence, liberated would first be Slavonic peoples who would set up a Slavonic Republic, and next - the rest of the world, which would lead to the establishment of a *Universal Republic*. The **Związek Ludu Polskiego** (Union of the Polish People, 1872-1876), set up on the initiative of General W. Wróblewski and K. Dąbrowski, also was in favour of a free and independent homeland which would join the federation of the States of Europe.



**Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz**, sociologist, activist and theorist of the Polish Socialist Party, thought ensuring peace to Europe to be the overriding goal. In the text published in 1903, he argued that the only way to achieve universal disarmament



was to set up a union of states (or even one federal state) whose organs would be endowed with real power over its member states. The socialist party would organize the struggle for democratization of the regimes of the European states, which struggle would be the prerequisite for disarmament.



The 1907 programme of the **Związek Młodej Polski Ludowej** (ZMPL, Union of Young People's Poland) advanced the idea of a *Poland free and happy in a great union with free and happy peoples of Europe!* The ZMPL's goal was a federation (a pan-union) of European peoples on the principles of equality, fraternity and liberty. The young activists believed that such federation would give the nations of Europe a chance to accomplish mankind's most important tasks.

The exhibition *Europe of Free Nations. Idea of an Integrated Continent in Polish 19th Century Thought* has been prepared by the European Information and Documentation Centre (OIDE) of the Sejm Library.  
The exhibition curator – Regina Wąsowicz, OIDE.

Translation of the text of W.B. Jastrzębowski on the cover by Wiktor Mikiszko  
[from:] *Traktat o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi. Konstytucja dla Europy*, Warszawa-Łódź 1985

Texts presented in the exhibition and their translation  
© Copyright  
by Chancellery of the Sejm  
Warszawa 2008