

# Federalism in the History of Poland

*The free with the free, the equal with the equal*

## 19th Century: *Let us be Europeans*

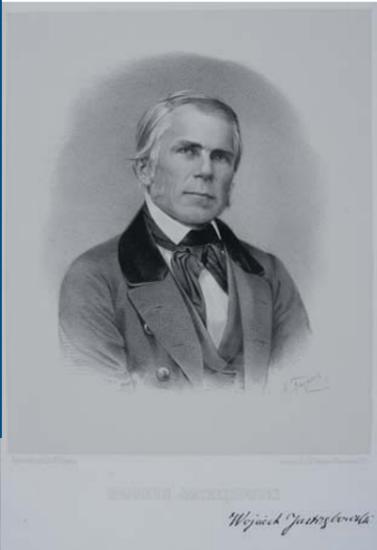
## Federations for East-Central Europe 1918-1952

The nineteenth century brought a fundamental change in the manner in which Polish politicians and thinkers perceived the question of federalism. The loss of their own state at the end of the eighteenth century became the reason why they concentrated primarily on ways of regaining independence; thus, it inspired a search for a European order that would contain a guaranteed place for a free Commonwealth. Such a chance was perceived in the construction of a federated Europe. To this discussion its Polish participants contributed the intellectual accomplishments of the earlier epochs, and in particular the experiences of the Polish-Lithuanian union.

The authors whose works may be analysed within the context of federalism include renowned politicians, philosophers, artists and men of science: Stanisław Staszic, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński, August Cieszkowski, Karol Libelt, Stanisław Worcell or Bolesław Limanowski. Their texts are by no means uniform – some deal with a concrete “federalist” proposal while others treat European unification as a marginal motif. All share the conviction that a new European order – regardless whether it was to be the outcome of political calculation, moral obligation or pure philosophy – must possess the nature of a variously comprehended federation and be built only by free nations. Each of the authors could endorse the appeal made by an unidentified publicist in 1838: *Being Poles we want to be something more, let us be Europeans.*

We present below two of the nineteenth-century authors: the characteristic traits of their achievements include either a novel approach, as in the case of W. B. Jastrzębowski, or a favourable reception by their contemporaries (S. Buszczyński).

**Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski (1799-1882)**, naturalist, outstanding pedagogue, participant of the November Uprising of 1830-1831; under the impact of the bloody battle of Olszynka Grochowska he wrote *Traktat o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi. Konstytucja dla Europy* (Treatise on Eternal Alliance among Civilized Nations. The Constitution for Europe, 1831). Jastrzębowski accepted the premise that peace is the supreme value of each man. Permanent peace in Europe can be based only on the introduction and close observation by the nations of joint legal norms, to be contained in a European Constitution. The equality of people comprising a nation – which he envisaged as a community of language – is to be guaranteed by national laws, while the equality of all European nations – by European laws. National laws should be passed by a Sejm (Parliament), while European laws must be enacted by a Congress composed of representatives of all nations, whose equal numbers are to be elected by national Sejms. The European Constitution defined the competences and principles of the functioning of the authorities, sanctions for violating legal norms, and the basic rights and duties of the citizens. The union was to be open to all states, including non-European ones, which would accept the established principles. In the Constitution Jastrzębowski also included a radical plan for disarmament and a defence coalition in the form of an *eternal alliance*, at the same time postulating the creation of a common European army. He launched the idea of educating the youth of Europe for life in peace, tolerance and friendship between the nations, and called for the abolition of the death penalty. Finally, Jastrzębowski wished to change all those national emblems, which contained symbols of violence.



**Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski**  
Lithograph, M. Fajans, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie



**Allegory of the Polish-Lithuanian Union** on a statue of the Union of Lublin  
P. Maliński

Fragment of a bas-relief from an obelisk in Lublin, which in 1826 was placed upon the initiative of Stanisław Staszic (a propagator of the idea of a unification of European nations) on the spot of a 16th-century obelisk, demolished by the tsarist authorities.

Many nineteenth-century Polish authors referred outright, although frequently in an idealised form, to the experiences of the Union of Lublin, and maintained that the historical association of Poland and Lithuania would be not only the foundation of a future independent Republic but a model for a united Europe and, at the same time, its basis. These motifs, which to an increasing extent thwarted Lithuanian aspirations for creating an independent state, remained present in Polish thought up to the First World War. Soon it was to become apparent that the reconstruction of the Commonwealth in its old formula was absolutely impossible. The world emerging after the Versailles treaty made it necessary to seek other solutions.

### Allegory of Europe

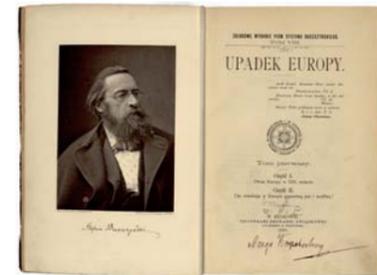
*Dziela Stanisława Staszica*, Warszawa 1820  
Biblioteka Sejmowa

*All nations belonging to the eternal alliance in Europe are due equal allegiance to European laws.*

*The existence, independence and property of each nation shall be the object of the particular protection of European laws.*

W.B. Jastrzębowski, 1831

**Stefan Buszczyński (1821-1892)**, historian, political man of letters, and active participant of the January Uprising of 1863; in a dissertation *La décadence de l'Europe* (1867) he opposed the political system of Europe, criticising the materialism of the culture of the period and the decline of spiritual values. Buszczyński contrasted the European crisis with an ideal vision of a fraternal federal union of free nations. His work met with interest among the French and German intellectuals of the time. In 1916 a second edition was issued in Switzerland; according to its publishers' intention, it was to prepare the ground for the construction of a post-war order in Europe.



*Ranki Europy. Fakta statystyczne z objaśnieniami etnograficznymi i dziejowymi, "Warta" 1884-1885*  
(The Wounds of Europe. Statistical Facts with Ethnographic and Historical Explanations, "Warta" 1884-1885)

"Although the natural frontiers of each ethnopolis should be delineated as precisely as possible, international relations must not experience any obstacles. Free movement, free thought, and free labour are the natural rights of all men. Hence it follows that all artificial political boundaries, all barriers hampering communication between men, the exchange of ideas, free industry and trade, such as: passports, customs, press prohibitions and such like, should be eliminated once and for all in the whole of Europe. *Laissez marcher, laissez faire, laissez passer* [...]"

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### Declaration of 17-22 May 1917

signed by many political parties active at the time on Polish soil, including the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe), the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) and the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna), called for independence also for the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and assured that "Poland will strive unyieldingly towards restoring a union with an independent Lithuania in the firm conviction that the peoples inhabiting Lithuania: the Lithuanians, the Poles and the Byelorussians, will discover in a voluntary and harmonious union of those states a guarantee of the national, cultural and economic development of all the social strata".

Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie

Federation plans conceived by Józef Piłsudski entailed a project aiming at the protection of the eastern frontiers of Poland and were not directed against Russia as such but Russian imperialism (both "white" and "red"). The independence of Ukraine and Lithuania comprised an initial condition and a path towards a federation with Poland. The failure of this conception resulted from the negative attitude of our neighbours and the configuration of inner forces. International relations proved to be just as relevant – the policy of preserving a balance of forces on the Continent and the hopes harboured by the member states of the victorious coalition for rebuilding Russia as their strategic partner.



**Józef Piłsudski**, K. Krzyżanowski, 1921  
Muzeum Wojska Polskiego, Warszawa

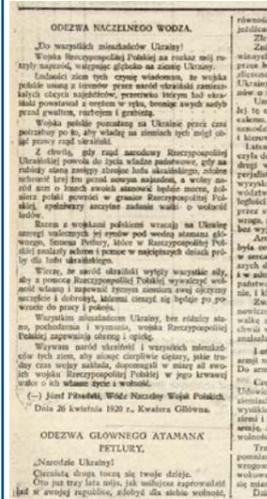
Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935) – independence activist and leader of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) during the partition era, founder of the Legions, Head of State 1918-1922, exerted a decisive impact on the shape of Poland reborn after 123 years of partitions; deeply attached to the idea of a Commonwealth of many nations, Piłsudski described himself as a Lithuanian.

### Proclamation of the Head of State to the population of Ukraine, 26 April 1920, "Monitor Polski", 26 April 1920 no. 97, Biblioteka Sejmowa

Document preparing the Kiev operation. Announcing an alliance with S. Petlura, the proclamation promised that the Polish Army would stay on the Dnieper only up to assumption of power by a "legitimate Ukrainian government".

The end of the first world war posed the problem of European security and borders, including those of the Polish state. A decree issued on September 1918 by the Soviet Council of People's Commissars on the annulment of the partitions treaties drew attention to the *status quo ante* in the east, i.e. the frontiers from 1772, although, naturally, all parties were well aware of the fundamental change of the situation in this region. The suspension by the victorious powers of decisions relating to the eastern border of Poland while awaiting the results of the Russian civil war and the restitution of "white Russia", envisaged as an important player on the European scene, as well as the westwards advance of the encroaching Red Army, called for solutions that would safeguard Polish independence. In this situation, Józef Piłsudski, the Head of State, and his adherents supported by the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the Polish Peasant Party-Liberation (PSL-Wyzwolenie) and some of the conservatives, acknowledged that Poland was capable of opposing imperial Russia only in her capacity as the centre of a federation, linked predominantly with Lithuania and Ukraine. This conception, which undoubtedly referred to the tradition of the First Commonwealth and opposed the incorporation programme proclaimed by the national camp (a majority in the Sejm), turned out to be unfeasible. Embarking upon the construction of her own state Lithuania decidedly rejected any sort of a union with Poland, while Byelorussian national consciousness was still embryonic, and the Ukrainians, passive during the offensive of 1920, regarded the Poles (*cuius* the controversy concerning Eastern Galicia) and not the Russians to be their main opponents. All attempts to create an independent Ukrainian state in the course of the war against Bolshevik Russia (the convention signed on 21 April 1920 by Poland and the Ukrainian People's Republic under S. Petlura, with the Polish Republic recognising Ukrainian independence) collapsed in the face of the great offensive of the Red Army, halted in the forefields of Warsaw in August 1920. The idea of a reconstruction of the Polish state according to the principles of federalism ultimately failed after the Peace of Riga, which ended the war with Russia (18 March 1921) and destroyed chances for Ukraine as an independent state, and in the wake of the incorporation of Central Lithuania in March 1922.

Józef Piłsudski was not an ideological federalist, and although his vision proved unsuccessful, in the opinion of numerous historians it was only thanks to this vision that it became possible to ensure – at least for a certain time – Poland's secure eastern frontier.





# “New Europe” and Planning Board

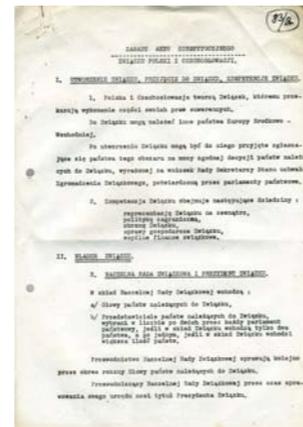
# Polish Underground State

“[...] A union is tantamount to strength, and strength is a guarantor of peace. The governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia have arrived at an agreement concerning a post-war federation. A similar treaty was signed by Yugoslavia and Greece. The Polish government, which I head, supports the conception of a federation of East-Central Europe [...]”.

W. Sikorski's interview for "Collier's", 1 April 1943, [in:] Feliks Gross, *Federacje i konfederacje europejskie. Rodowód i wizje*, Warszawa 1994.

**General Sikorski accompanied by Mjr. Miszke and Józef H. Retinger** who took an active part in devising the initiatives of the Polish government in exile concerning Central Europe (i.a. a project of a Central European federation). After the war, Retinger organised the Hague Congress in 1948 and was involved in the creation of the European Movement.

Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego, London



**Edvard Beneš, Prime Minister of the government of Czechoslovakia, and Władysław Sikorski (1881-1943), Prime Minister of the government of the Republic of Poland (1939-1943)**

co-authors of Polish-Czechoslovak conventions about the post-war union of the two states. Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego, London

**Principles of the Constitutional Act of the Union of Poland and Czechoslovakia**, 21 May 1941, Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego, London

**S**tructures of the Polish Underground state, which existed on Polish territory at the time of the Nazi occupation, recognised the authority of the government of the Republic of Poland in exile, and remained organisationally connected with the latter, referred in their documents to the government conception of organising a post-war order in Europe based on the principles of a federation.

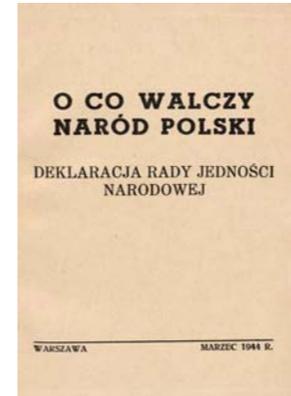
Below we present the stands taken by the National Political Representation (Krajowa Reprezentacja Polityczna – KRP, an organ of the Polish Underground State), which included representatives of the four most important political parties, and the Council of National Unity, which in January 1944 stemmed from the KRP.

**Declaration of a political agreement of the parties comprising the National Political Representation**  
Warsaw, 15 August 1943

In reference to the government programme documents, four political parties: the National Party (Stronnictwo Narodowe), the Peasant Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe), the Labour Party (Stronnictwo Pracy) and the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna), which recognised themselves as representative for an overwhelming majority of Polish society, announced as regards the organisation of a post-war order in Europe a project of creating a confederation of states, whose centre would be a Polish-Czechoslovak union or Poland on her own.

**What is the Polish nation fighting for: a declaration of the Council of National Unity**  
Warsaw, 15 March 1944

This document acknowledged the unification of the states of Central and South-East Europe into federal unions as an essential condition for guaranteeing permanent peace in Europe. Emphasis was placed on the active part played by Poland from the onset of the war.



**What is the Polish nation fighting for:**  
a declaration of the Council of National Unity, Warszawa 15 March 1944, Biblioteka Narodowa



**Presented book is a summary of Polish federation thought from the time of the Second World War**, New York 1945

Feliks Gross (1906-2006), sociologist, devised a conception of a "democratic, integral federalism".

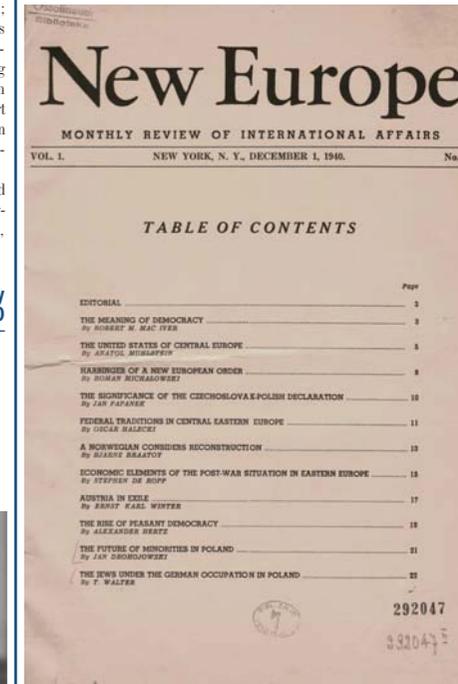
**P**eriodical “New Europe” and the Central and Eastern European Planning Board comprised a joint forum created in New York for exchanging and forming views about the federation ideas of the East-Central European states. They emerged and worked with the cooperation of the Polish Information Centre, an institution supervised by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in the USA.

**“New Europe”, December 1940 – August 1945:** circulation of 2500 copies a month, cooperated with numerous outstanding scientists and politicians, both American and representing assorted European countries. Authors collaborating with “New Europe” included Carlo Sforza, Jacques Maritain, Jan Masaryk, and the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Ripka. The discussion about an East-Central Europe federation involved, i.a. Anatol Muhlstein, who presented a project of a constitution for the federation of states from this region. “New Europe” established close cooperation with the Central and Eastern European Planning Board and issued the latter’s numerous studies and analyses. The editor-in-chief was Feliks Gross, secretary general of the Board.

**Title page of the monthly “New Europe”, 1 December 1940**  
Article by A. Muhlstein is the first in a series containing a project of the United States of East-Central Europe.



**Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPPB), 7 January 1942 – 25 July 1945**, was composed of representatives of the émigré governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece; the Polish delegation was directly supervised by the Polish government. The Planning Board was responsible for planning the post-war reconstruction of the whole of Central and Eastern Europe as regards social issues, the economy and education. The greatest accomplishment of the CEEPPB was the establishment, together with New York University and the US Committee on Educational Reconstruction, of an Institute of Eastern Europe (7-8 April 1943), whose objective was the reconstruction of European education systems. The Institute also propagated plans for the federation of East-Central Europe, known as the A-B (Adriatic-Baltic) zone federation. Some of the notions launched by the Planning Board, such as a project of a future UNESCO or a European University, were ultimately realised.



**Anatol Muhlstein (1889-1957)**  
Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

Diplomat, in the interwar period at the Embassies of the Republic of Poland in Brussels and subsequently in Paris; member of the majority of Polish delegations to the League of Nations assemblies; from 1940 – in the US, co-publisher of the periodical “New Europe”; after the war – collaborator of the Paris-based “Kultura”.

# Polish Freedom Movement

**B**“Both [...] the Polish national interest – today, when we are concerned with an effective struggle for independence, and tomorrow, when the goal will be a permanent securing of independence – and a realistic assessment of the development of international relations require that Polish foreign policy be based on federal premises [...]”

R. Piłsudski, *Polish Federal Programme*

The Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” (Polski Ruch Wolnościowy “Niepodległość i Demokracja” – PRW NiD), which existed from 19 February 1945 to 19 November 1994, attracted representatives of assorted political currents referring to independence-oriented and democratic traditions, and concentrated predominantly members of the political and intellectual emigration. The head of the first Council was Andrzej Pomian, and the first and long-term chairman (for 37 years) of the Central Executive Committee was Rowmund Piłsudski. The establishment of PRW NiD was a reaction to the resolutions of the Yalta Conference, and the first programme from October 1945 included a declaration about active cooperation with the liberation movements of other nations in order to ensure freedom for a united and democratic Europe, and thus also for Poland.

The programme premises, passed at the I General Assembly of the PRW NiD on 8 December 1947, subsequently supplemented in 1956, and finally brought up to date in 1989, were composed of two parts: *Karta Wolnego Człowieka* (The Charter of the Free Man) and *Karta Wolnego Polaka* (The Charter of the Free Pole). We read therein that a permanent guarantee of national independence relies not on nationalism and unlimited state sovereignty, but on a new international order, based on the principles of regional federalism and a regional and universal system of equal rights for all nations. The conceptions launched by the PRW NiD rested on two foundations: a multi-step federation (the federation of East-Central Europe as an element of a European federation) and the establishment of a “crystallisation centre” (Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, owing to their industrial base). This was the best-prepared and motivated project of a multi-step federation, proposed by the émigré circles.

The PRW NiD activists established cooperation with representatives of other independence-oriented movements from East-Central Europe. NiD initiatives led to the creation in 1949 of the Union of Polish Federalists, which became part of the Union of European Federalists, and the Polish-Czechoslovak studies group in New York (which published the quarterly “East-Central European Federalist”), with the participation of a Hungarian member. Members of the PRW NiD acted in, i.a. the European Movement, the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN) in New York, and the permanent East-Central Europe Conference in Washington. The organisation reached its zenith in the 1955-1957 period, and its press organ was “Trybuna”.



**Rowmund Piłsudski (1903-1988)**

Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego, London

# Intermarium according to federal clubs

**I**dea of the creation of a federation/ confederation in East-Central Europe was developed, i.a. by the federal clubs established by political exiles from the East-Central European states, which referred to the conception of the Intermarium – a union of states located between the Baltic, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. The clubs commenced their work at the time of the Second World War, and their greatest activity took place in the years 1945-1952.

The programme documents of the federal clubs included: *Nasze cele* (Our Targets, London 1945), *Karta Wolnego Miedzynorza* (A Charter of the Free Intermarium, Rome 1946) and *Projekt Konwencji Państw Intermarium* (A Project of the Convention of the Intermarium States, Paris 1948). According to a Paris Club project the Intermarium union was to link all the states of the region: Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. Plans were made for the creation of a regional confederation. The convention project proposed a number of supranational institutions with strongly defined competences, limited primarily to foreign and defensive policies (the union was to be pacifistic) and the coordination of economic cooperation. A Confederation

Co-founder of the Polish Freedom Movement

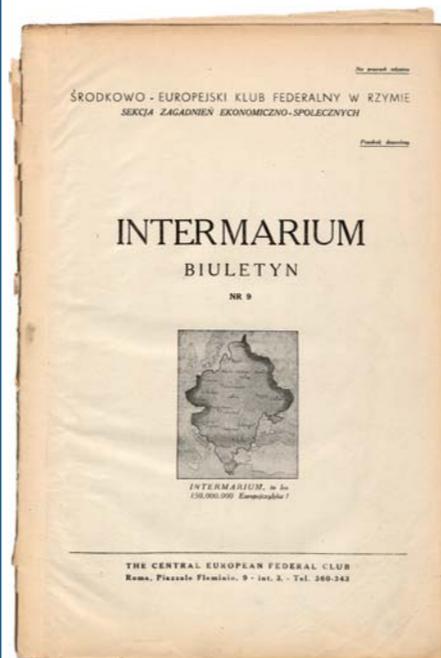
“Independence and Democracy” (NiD) and subsequently its leader for many years, regarded as the ideologist of the movement.

NiD, initiator of the establishment in 1949 of the Union of Polish Federalists (ZPF), influenced directly its work – thus it is sometimes difficult to separate the activity of ZPF and NiD. ZPF, similarly to NiD, devised the conception of long-term undertakings, including multi-step regional federalism, endeavoured that its programme would reach political centres both in the West and the USA, and tried to influence Poland by supplying information on federalism (books, bulletins, Radio Free Europe broadcasts).

Council was to be responsible for foreign policy. An Executive Department of the Union was to coordinate inner activity, and an Assembly of Union States was conceived as a legislative organ. The project foresaw the creation of two supreme tribunals: an Arbitrage Tribunal for considering controversies between the union states, and a Constitutional and Administrative Tribunal for examining complaints about the violation of Union law or civic rights within the Union. Taking into consideration the establishment of a European multi-step federation, plans were made for the Intermarium to join a continental organisation and then a global community.

In 1948 the government of the Republic of Poland in exile established an Office of East-Central European Studies at the Polish Institute of International Affairs Studies in London, which set up close contacts with the federal clubs, supporting them with expert studies and forwarding their research material to “Biuletyn Intermarium”, published in Rome in the years 1946-1950.

The clubs did not establish contact with the European movement in the West, nor did they create a joint representation. They criticised the idea of integration limited to Western Europe. The Western countries denied the federal clubs the right to participate in such integration initiatives as the Hague Congress or later on the Council of Europe. The clubs’ activity began to wane at the beginning of the 1950s, and after final cessation in 1952 was taken over by the Union of Polish Federalists.



# “Kultura” – thinking Europe

**P**“Poland is capable of ensuring independence and security for herself only in a federation system. Every federation is always a sum of compromises. The times when we federalised others are long gone. Today, a federation is possible only according to the principle of absolute equality. At present, we are unable to realise a federation of the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, but we should consider the question of the liberation of those countries already as our joint problem.”

J. Mieroszewski, *O międzynarodową brygadę europejską*

During the post-war period the “Kultura” milieu first joined a debate on the consequences of the Second World War and the division of Europe, and then, at the turn of the 1940s, a discussion about the future of Europe as well as the attitude of Western Europe towards divided Germany, the Soviet Union, and the states of the Soviet bloc. “Kultura” closely observed all the conceptions of European federations, always taking as its point of departure the position of Poland (visualized as independent in the future) among her neighbours, and viewed in a European perspective.

A prominent motif in the debate, perpetually tackled by Juliusz Mieroszewski, one of permanent collaborators of “Kultura”, was the necessity of Poland recognising the independence aspirations of Ukraine, Lithuania and Byelorussia (in other words, the acknowledgment that they too had a right to create independent states on territories which in the Second Republic remained within the frontiers of the Polish state) and the conciliation of the Poles and their eastern neighbours, signifying a voluntary resignation from all claims to Lwów and Wilno, with a simultaneous defence of the affiliation to Poland of its western territories. Just as important was the arrangement of good neighbourly cooperation with Russia and Germany. The opinions voiced by J. Mieroszewski were representative for the line propounded by the editors of “Kultura”.

**“INTERMARIUM, the fate of 150 000 000 Europeans!”** – propaganda slogan from the cover of “Biuletyn Intermarium” no. 9, March 1948

While NiD focused on joint interest, the federal clubs of East-Central Europe frequently referred to moral arguments.

From the time of the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) the “Kultura” milieu became involved in discussions on the consecutive stages of all the aspects of integration, with pride of place given to a European political-cultural union which offered hope for the participation of Poland in this particular form of cooperation.

The question of a European federation was considered by Aleksander Kawalkowski, who spoke in favour of a gradual realisation of the federation projects:

“[...] Western Europe should be solely the core of a future entity. Europe in the full meaning of the word could emerge only after the liberation and organisation, according to federal principles, of the area between the Odra-Nysa-Sudety line and the eastern borders of the non-Russian lands [...]”

Aleksander Kawalkowski, *Kapitulacja czy wyzwolenie* (Capitulation or liberation) “Kultura”, no. 6/44, 1951.

In a speech given in 1951 at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin, Józef Czapki linked the question of a European federation with the right to self-determination for countries behind the Iron Curtain. Into this group he included also the nations of the USSR, and mentioned the example of Ukraine which, in his opinion, has “more historical connections (with Europe) than the average European is aware of”.

Józef Czapki, *W Berlinie o Zjednoczonej Europie* (In Berlin about United Europe) “Kultura”, no. 9/47, 1951.

Juliusz Mieroszewski maintained that in Polish politics the term “independence” must contain the federation idea. By following the example of J. Czapki, he postulated that all representatives of Central and Eastern Europe who lived in free countries should sign a joint commitment that they would resolve controversial territorial issues only after the creation of a European federation and by taking into consideration “the welfare of Europe as a whole”. To this postulate he added the expansion of a centre for the education of young people from behind the Iron Curtain in a federal spirit and upon the basis of Collège d’Europe Libre in Strasbourg. His third proposal concerned an international East-Central European brigade as part of the European armed forces.

Juliusz Mieroszewski, *O międzynarodową brygadę europejską* (For an international European brigade) “Kultura”, no. 11/49, 1951.



**House in 91, avenue de Poissy**, by J. Czapki 1955, Instytut Literacki Kultura

Seat of the editorial staff of “Kultura”.