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## Polish initiatives to unify Europe

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Polityka i Społeczeństwo nr 7, 139-149

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2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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Edward A. Mierzwa

## POLISH INITIATIVES TO UNIFY EUROPE

The idea to unify Europe has enjoyed more than a thousand years old tradition. It dates back to the time of Otto I, Otto III and Pope Innocentius III. Poles played a role in the matter, too. The Gniezno congress could be seen as the first of Polish initiatives of this kind (it was organised in 1000), if it had been followed by any specific consequences. The first of any real attempts to unify Europe was the Act signed at Krewa that united Poland and Lithuania. This initiative is well described in Polish historiography and this is why it is only cursorily mentioned in this paper. After the Act of Krewa was issued, which is difficult to be interpreted in terms of a classical legal act, we find in the history of modern Europe at most three similar but later acts concluded between states. The first of them established the Kalmar Union, imposed on Sweden on 20 July in 1397 by Margaret I, Queen of Denmark and Norway. The next was the personal union between Spain and Portugal, concluded in 1580, after the Portuguese dynasty of the Aviz had died out. **It remains uncertain whether the Danish queen Margaret and the Spanish king Philip II von Hapsburg knew the document authored by Władysław Jagiello – one may only assume that they did!** However, there is no doubt, whatsoever, that the Polish-Lithuanian statutes had been studied by the English Parliament and Privy Council in the last years preceding the death of Elizabeth I Tudor (24 March, 1603) and the Anglo-Scottish Union of the Crowns of 1603. I could read the documents confirming this fact while for many months doing my research at the Public Record Office in London.

Browsing through the series of the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*.<sup>1</sup> and the minutes of the sessions of the English Privy Council, I came across notes stating that the texts of the Polish-Lithuanian

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts of the documents were published in: *Calendar of State Papers. Domestic, 1603–1610*, London 1857, p. 46, 90 and ff.

unions of 1385, 1411, and 1569 were subject to study and debate by the English Parliament and the Privy Council during the last period of Elizabeth I Tudor's reign<sup>2</sup>. As the *Proceedings* suggest, during that period the Parliament discussed the documents of the Polish-Lithuanian unions five times, while the Privy Council dealt with them during four of its consecutive sessions while considering the draft of the union that would unify England and Scotland. **This fact makes me feel entitled to claim that the documents of the Polish-Lithuanian unions played some role in the shaping of the so called Union of the Crowns concluded in 1603.** This issue has been completely unknown to either Polish or British historians.

I will now devote some space to the question: to what degree did the documents establishing the Polish-Lithuanian unions play an inspiring role in giving shape to the English-Scottish union? – I believe that the answer to this question matters. At the end of the sixteenth century, when no hope could be found that Elizabeth I would give birth to an heir to the English throne, not paying attention to the queen's dissatisfaction, her pedigree pet and permanent opponent, Robert Devereux, the second Count of Essex, who was even considered and considered himself an heir to the throne, initiated talks with James VI Stuart, the king of Scotland. He did not manage to conclude the negotiations being very impatient by nature. Besides, the queen, in spite of her poor health, did not want to step down. Following the February revolt against the queen that was instigated by Essex in London in 1601, he was sentenced to death and his head was cut off at the London Tower. Lord Essex's initiative was, however, continued by Sir Robert Cecil, Count of Salisbury (about 1563–1612), an eminent diplomat and chancellor, the son of Sir William Cecil, Duke of Burghley. When he asked Elizabeth who was to be her heir, she said: „Well, who else but our Scottish cousin?” It was Sir Robert Cecil who prepared the ground for the peaceful transfer of the English crown to the Stuart dynasty (the English say: *Robert Cecil had already paved the way for the Stuart Family*). Cecil had to overcome not only the queen's distrust but also unwillingness, if not hostility of the Scots – today the Union of the Crowns

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<sup>2</sup> PRO, CSP. Domestic, 1601–1603 and CSP. Domestic 1603–1610. Their requests were published by M.A. Everett: CSP. Domestic 1602–1603, London 1870 (*passim*), and CSP. Domestic 1603–1606, London 1857 (p. 46, 90); Acts of Privy Council, 1602–1603, London 1864. All together there are five notes concerning the documents establishing the Polish-Lithuanian unions in CSP. Domestic, while in APC – four. Cf. Mierzwa 2003 for more on the issue.

of 1603 is interpreted by them as the English euphemism for the interception of the English Crown by the Scottish Stuarts. Cecil's road to success was difficult and unrewarding. The peaceful march toward the union with Scotland had been blocked by the English when they invaded and wrought havoc on the Tweed Valley and the county of Lothians. Henry VIII decimated the Scotts at Flodden (1513) and after his death, the warden and grandfather of Edward VI (who was then under age), Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, tried to unify both of the Crowns in the person of his grandson: he demolished the Scotts in the meadows of Pinkie nearby Edinburgh in 1547.

Nominating the king of Scotland, James VI Stuart, to be her heir, Elizabeth I was motivated by at least two reasons: the first was the fact that some Tudor blood circulated in James's veins; the second – psychological – reason was that she possibly wanted to repent for his mother's death whom she had sentenced to capital punishment being aware that the evidence against her was fake.

On 19 May in 1603, in contrast to Jagiełło, who in the writing declared at Krewa the union of Poland and Lithuania, James I proclaimed the Union of England and Scotland, saying to the representatives of his new subjects: „Now, finally the two countries came to be eternally united, both in law and in my person as a lawful heir to both of the Crowns... What God united, let Man not dare disunite. The Isle is no longer divided by any real borders, unless imagined; it has only one, shared borderland or rather common border defended by the Ocean. This makes it a small and self-contained world on its own right, with United Nations, both spiritually and bodily, in particular sharing their maritime interests. It establishes in the Isle a community of language (which is the fundamental basis of social life) and the unity of religion, the deepest bond between the hearts and the guarantee of eternal peace” (Rowse 1976: 31–32).

The so called Union of the Crowns of 1603, being a classical personal union, rested only on the royal proclamation and was not confirmed by any written document similar to the Polish-Lithuanian Union of Krewa. In November of 1603, James I/VI introduced a common 20-shilling coin called „unite”, and a year after that a common flag – the so called Union Jack, combining the white and red elements of the English Saint George's Cross with the white and blue Scottish Saint Andrew's Cross.

Assuming as our point of departure the fact that the regulations constituting the Union of the Crowns of 1603, were almost identical with the regulations of the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1385, including their subsequent amendments, there is no doubt that the Polish-

Lithuanian document was taken as a model to follow by the English and the Scots, which is evidenced by the quoted PRO documents.

After the Union of Krewa had been concluded, the Poles aimed at ever tighter unification of the territories of the Lithuanian Dukedom and the Polish Crown, which was reflected in the Lublin Union of 1569. Subsequently, Stefan Batory made attempts to create an anti-Turkish league. In the second half of the sixteenth century, we had had one more unification initiative – the personal union of Poland and Sweden in the person of the shared monarch, Zygmunt III. That Union produced effects contrary to the expectations – it intensified the struggle for *dominium Maris Baltici* in the seventeenth century. The union did not spell well for the future for several reasons: apart from political weakness of Zygmunt III, which I list in the first place, there were the economic disparities, cultural and religious differences. The latter started to be perceived in Poland of the seventeenth century in an ever less positive manner. In the second half of that century that perception turned Poland – so far a tolerant country – into a parochial land of myopic religious fervor.

Another idea aiming at unification, which, unfortunately, was never implemented, and today, in the era of the uniting Europe remains forgotten, was embodied in a project aiming at a federation of Lithuania, Moscow and Poland that had been authored by the great hetman (commander-in-chief) Stanisław Żółkiewski (1547–1620), as evidenced by his memoirs entitled *Początek i progres wojny moskiewskiej* [The beginning and progress of the Moscow war]. The hetman, critical of the Polish aggression against Moscow, but unwillingly implicated in its whirl, outlined a program of his own, which differed from the royal one and the plans by the court party (*dworska kamaryla*) of the Potocki, Mniszech and other families. Żółkiewski envisaged a *modus vivendi* with Moscow based on a dynastic union concluded by Poland with its eastern neighbor and in the unification of Moscow – in a federation – with Lithuania and Poland forming one, great state organism in Eastern Europe. Żółkiewski's conception found many supporters in the milieu of the Russian noblemen (the boyars) since it put in the foreground the respect for the Muscovite traditions: political, institutional and religious. Żółkiewski's *Pamiętnik* makes a positive exception against the background of the anti-Moscow fervor of the many authors in that period. His narration is free of invectives, presenting a sober and rational political analysis and indicating the necessity to demonstrate „humanity” („ludzkość”) to Moscow. The hetman not only proved to be an emi-

ment strategist, but also an extraordinary man of letters – his memoirs are included in the canonical old Polish literary works.

The implementation of Żółkiewski's plan had been prevented by several obstacles, of which let me mention the most important. The first was related to Zygmunt III who opposed any plans that did not take into account himself as a candidate for the Tsar cap. The second – resided in too big a gap between the Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic religions. The third – involved the fact that the Russians sought alliances everywhere, including London, instead of Warsaw<sup>3</sup>.

The attempts to create a Christian anti-Turkish league, the victory of Sobieski at Vienna as well as diplomatic initiatives that aimed at the resolution of Turkish-European problem by diplomatic means, could all be treated as instances of the unification thought. Sobieski would send his envoys to England, France, the Netherlands, the Papal state, Venice, Austria and Russia, and even diplomatic letters to China and Persia, trying to unite the world in an anti-Turkish league. That diplomatic action, which was an example of Poland's involvement in the idea whose scope exceeded Europe, bore some fruit only after Jan III's death – it was the peace treaty of Karłowice.

King Stanisław Leszczyński (1677–1766), the father-in law of Louis XIV, belonged to the forefathers of European unification as well. He expressed his intentions in the following papers: *List pewnego Szwajcara do jego korespondenta w Holandii* [A letter of a Swiss citizen to his correspondent in the Netherlands] (1743) and *Memorial o ustanowieniu pokoju powszechnego* [Memorial to establish universal peace] (1748). He postulated in the papers to create **Organizacja Republik Europejskich** [Organisation of European Republics] – a union of states led by France. The organisation was to be the guardian of peace and cooperation in the continent. Leszczyński was aware of economic disparities, and cultural and religious differences that excluded the possibility of creating just one, supranational European state. *Organizacja* was to include only republican states. He made France an

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<sup>3</sup> PRO, CSP. Domestic, Lord Chamberlain to Carleton, of 29 IV 1613, in which he wrote: „A few Moscow noblemen made an offer to accept the Royal protection. The King considers an idea to send his army to Moscow and rule the country *via* a governor, being certain of success”. See also: a diplomatic note by the Venetian ambassador in London who informed the doge in Venice that on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November in 1612, a group of Russian noblemen came as envoys to London from Moscow bringing a proposal for James I to ascend to the throne of the tsars (CSP Ven., vol. XII, no. 137 and 808). The project was analyzed by Nina Lubimenko (1912, 1914, 1917).

exception, whose monarch was to play the role of the Organisation's protector, which, however, did not eliminate the principle of sovereign equality between the Organisation's members. He believed in an international agreement between the sovereign states. In spite of being a fervently devoted Catholic, he spoke in favor of a European community that was based on republican principles, and not religious. He believed that the republican system was the most adequate model that could prevent aggressive politics, and thus act to sustain peace. In his conception of *pax republicana*, which he made public at the end of his life, he proposed that European Parliament be created, including representatives of France, Poland, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Venice, Genoa and Swiss cantons. The League of the state-nations would form an army, whose core would be constituted by the French troops. The League members would be obliged to mediation during international conflicts. If a war broke out, they would be obliged to support the state that had been attacked. His idea was not solely a theoretical project; it resulted from the experience of his reign in the Polish-Lithuanian Republic of the Twin Nations (*Rzeczypospolita Obojga Narodów*). Many of his contemporaries believed his proposal to be a naïve dream, since the Europeans could not imagine at that period thinking in terms of pan-European interests. Nevertheless, when analysing the various concepts of European unification, it is worth recollecting the little known intellectual and literary contribution of the Polish monarch who proved to be a thinker on the European scale – his ideas were much premature, which, however, is quite a different story.

The nineteenth-century unification projects that preceded by more than a hundred years the idea of the „Fathers” of the united Europe, that is Jean Monet, Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer, include also the little known (even to Poles) – *Konstytucja dla Europy* [Constitution for Europe] written by a November Uprising participant, a cannoneer of Gwardia Narodowa [National Guards] and a botanist – Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski (1799–1882).

What is fascinating in his *Konstytucja dla Europy* is not necessarily the idea of European unification, since this idea – as I have tried to demonstrate in the former parts of the paper – had been cherished in Poland for centuries. What is remarkable is the fact that Jastrzębowski envisaged and named many of the solutions that were later „repeated” in the real Union's structure and the EU nomenclature despite the fact that the Union's fathers did not have a clou that Jastrzębowski ever

existed, let alone that he had created *Konstytucja* – this document remained an undiscovered manuscript for more than 160 years. In 1831 Jastrzębowski had an idea of „presidencies” in the united Europe – lasting, however, not for 6 months as is the case nowadays, but for a full calendar year. He pictured a European tribunal (Court of Justice), committees and the many other principles that currently form the legal and institutional structure of the European Union. In between his fighting in the subsequent national uprisings, Jastrzębowski authored a leaflet entitled *Wolne chwile żołnierza polskiego, czyli myśli o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi* [Free moments of a Polish soldier, or on an eternal concord between the civilized nations]. The already mentioned *Konstytucja dla Europy* forms part of that treatise. In *Konstytucja*, a project of Kongres Europejski [European Congress] – a distant model for the later League of Nations is included, whose aim was to bring permanent peace. This idea was further developed by Jastrzębowski in his *Traktat o wiecznym przymierzu między narodami ucywilizowanymi*.

I am certain that *Wolne chwile żołnierza polskiego...*, the 18-pages long leaflet published in Warsaw in 1831, stored at Biblioteka Jagiellońska (ref. no. 222707 I), will finally draw the attention of historians and political scientists – as it deserves their interest. Perhaps, it will come to the attention of the successors of the „Fathers of Europe”, who claim today a monopoly of the idea to unite Europe – I am referring here to the arrogant statements by some of the Western politicians. Already in 1926, a journalist, Janusz Iwazskiewicz, tried to make Jastrzębowski’s *Konstytucja* known to the public for the first time – he published the pamphlet under a changed title as: *Nieznany polski projekt wiecznego pokoju* [An unknown Polish project for eternal peace] in „Polityka Narodów” (vol. 9, 1937, iss. 4, pp. 385–395), while trying to stimulate some general interest in it in the daily press. „Today, when Poland finally was granted a seat in the council of the League of Nations – wrote Iwazskiewicz in „Kurier Warszawski” – when pacifist slogans are voiced across Europe, it ought to be remembered that Poland had raised such slogans when dead silence accompanied the issue in Europe”.

Nearly 30 years after Iwazskiewicz’s attempt to revive Jastrzębowski’s ideas, they were taken up again by M. Muszkat, who in „Studia i Materiały do Historii Sztuki Wojennej” [Studies and materials for the history of war craft] (1954, pp. 293–301) discussed his project. A few



years ago Barbara Kubicka-Czekaj translated it into French and financed the publication of the little booklet entitled *W.B. Jastrzębowski-ego Konstytucja dla Europy* [W.B. Jastrzębowski's Constitution for Europe] trying to make publicly known in Paris the information concerning the Polish author of the idea of an European union, which was met with as much curiosity as incredulity. Some unknown *petit Polonais* were to prove to be a better prophet and visionary than J. Monet or R. Schuman, or Aristide Briand, and before them? In the period of 2002–2003, Benon Dymek published two dissertations: *Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski. Botanik, wizjoner zjednoczonej Europy* [Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski. A botanist, a visionary of a united Europe] (2002) and *Wizja przymierza między narodami Europy z 1831 r. według Wojciecha Bogumiła Jastrzębowskiego* [The vision of an alliance between the nations of Europe of 1831, according to Wojciech Bogumił Jastrzębowski] (2003). A cordial friend of mine, a „fishermen for adventure”, a discoverer of breaking news, and a guardian of the Wawel heritage, Zbigniew Świąch, wrote about Jastrzębowski, too.

*Konstytucja dla Europy* consists of 77 articles – Jastrzębowski was not only a visionary but also a mystic, which can probably explain why he concluded the constitution with magic sevens – and it stipulates that an all-European „Congress consisting of plenipotentiaries elected by all nations” should be called into existence by national parliaments. Its aim would entail the preservation of eternal peace, the lifting of geographical borders whose existence was seen by Jastrzębowski as the „main cause of bloodshed in Europe”, the erasing out of textbooks of all information about battles fought in the past, the condemnation of military history to be all forgotten since from time immemorial, from ancient Chinese *shu* and Greek epic descriptions sung or recited by *oidoi* until contemporary narratives of wars and the military, this type of history writing constitutes a very large part of all the world's historical heritage, if not its majority.

As envisaged by Jastrzębowski, in Europe – freed from borders but respecting national identities and wide-ranging national autonomy – „the nation is to consist of people who speak the same language, irrespective of where they happen to stay put in Europe”. Each nation – as Jastrzębowski would have it – was to be subject to national laws, constituted by respective national parliaments. The dispersed nations, such as the Roma or the Jews, were to conform not only to their own laws but also to the laws of the nations „with which they are mixed”. Paci-

fism was the fundamental principle which permeated the Constitution. This was reflected in Article 36, saying that all military weapons, that is the weapons that are designed for bloodshed, to be found on the European territory were to be owned by the united Europe. Some of the weapons were to be stored at locations indicated by Kongres Europejski (European Congress) to be used in case there was a need to defend the laws and security of Europe. The remaining weapons, which were dispensable, were to be „collected at some central area of this part of the world where they should be used to construct a sanctuary dedicated to God, the protector of laws and peace”.

Europe was to be a federation consisting not of states but of nations. However, the nations as envisaged in Article 11. In this respect Jastrzębowski was a pioneer – nowhere and never until then any treaty, written down or approved of by acclamation (read: imposed), that spoke about friendship between states had ever worked out, simply because it made no sense. It is obvious that there can be no friendship between states as institutional constructs. One may only speak about contacts and relations between nations and societies, relationships between individuals or unions of the sexes but never about friendship between states. Jastrzębowski realized this already 176 years ago. He believed that civilised nations are those that are allied within Kongres Europejski. The barbaric nations, which had not given up their possessiveness and warfare, were not barred from the integrative process by Jastrzębowski provided that they did away with their egoism. Non-European nations could also aspire to become associated with Europe if they identified with European civilisation and respected the choice of others to become a civilized nation.

The next of the Poles who dreamt about European unification was Józef Retinger (1888–1960). Retinger was a dreamer who sought opportunities to create a European federation. He saw the Polish-Czech-Slovak reconciliation as an introduction to such a European federation. Retinger, a graduate of the University of Sorbonne, a friend to many eminent artists and men of letters, lived in Great Britain since 1912. There, he became interested in politics and diplomacy and became associated with masonry. During WW I he carried out diplomatic missions both in Central states and the states of Entente. After the war he was an advisor to the Mexican president Plutarch Elías Calles, a radical socio-economic reformer and a promoter of the Mexican „peaceful revolution”.

During WW II, Retinger was a political advisor to General Władysław Sikorski. In 1944 he was secretly parachuted to Poland. His mission in the country remains unclear, though. It is guessed that the *emigree* government wanted to prevent the Warsaw Uprising, realizing that its significance would be purely symbolic, while the losses huge.

The diplomatic experience and personal acquaintance with most eminent representatives of the European political elites, including Briand Aristide, Richard Nicolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi as well as other supporters of European unification, exerted influence on Retinger. After WW II broke out, he became an advocate of the conception to create a central-eastern-European confederation once the war ended. He assumed unrealistically that a central European „cordon” could be created as a barrier against the Soviet expansionism. Retinger tried to make the British and American decision-makers aware that the Teheran and Yalta conferences meant a Soviet victory and they would act as a „Trojan horse” in the post-war world. In London, he organised private meetings between prominent politicians – dubbed the Retinger’s club. During the meetings he criticized the USSR and would persuade the participants to support the idea of post-war integration of Europe. It was during one of such „club” meetings that the politicians from Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg elaborated the idea of post-war Benelux.

Retinger liked to act. In 1946, he founded at Brussels Liga na rzecz Współpracy Gospodarczej [League in support of Economic Cooperation] and created its units in the states of Western Europe and the USA. In 1947, he pushed for the unification of the movement he had led with other, similar movements created by politicians and social activists. They formed the International Committee of European Movements (since 1949: the European Movement). Retinger became an honorary secretary of the Committee. The Retinger’s Committee organized the European Congress in the Hague in May of 1948. Many of the prominent Western European politicians and leaders as well as representatives of the Church took part in the Congress which was chaired by Winston Churchill. The Congress supported the conception of Europe’s unification almost in unison. Its participants appealed to the European governments to call a meeting of delegates representing the parliaments of the European states and to draft a European Charter of Human Rights. On 5 May in 1949, the Congress, following the motion supported *inter alia* by Retinger, founded the Council of Europe. The Council

was an association of the democratic states in the continent. It was the first step towards the integration of post-war Europe.

Retinger, being a dreamer, believed that it was possible to put into practice an idea of a zone of peace, cooperation and welfare and to persuade the entire world to follow this idea. He thought that the road to a world union could be paved by close European-American political and economic cooperation. The next of his initiatives was to establish the so called Bilderberg Group in 1954 (the name comes from the Bilderberg castle, nearby Arnhem in the Netherlands, where the founding meeting took place). The Bilderberg Group was an association of eminent personalities representing the world of politics, economy and science from both sides of the Atlantic. Retinger became the Group's secretary. Therefore, it might be assumed that Retinger made a considerable impact on the „Fathers” of the European Union, too, since they did participate in the proceedings of both of the organisations established by Retinger – this fact is completely ignored, being absent from the consciousness of not only societies of the European Union but also of euro-deputies. I could see this during my visit at the European Parliament in Brussels in January of 2009, when I checked the knowledge of EMPs on the subject during informal talks.

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