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Between *Intermarium* and *Eastern Switzerland*: Belarusian and Ukrainian Federative Projects, “Imperializing Nations,” and the Making of National Territories (1914–1920)*

Gennadii Korolov

INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 1920, the fourth Prime Minister of the Belarusian People’s Republic Anton Lutskevich stressed that, in the aftermath of the First World War in East Central Europe, “nations and new states must attain close cooperation between each other, because historical fate has placed them between two shattered but already revived titans Germany and Russia.”¹ The idea “between Germany and Russia” had long appeared in essays and political speeches, and was often adduced during ideological debates among Ukrainian and Belarusian national activists.

In this article, I argue that federalism evolved as one of the concepts of the statehood of lands “between Germany and Russia.” In my opinion, federalist ideas contributed to the conceptual and territorial formation of nation-states in East Central Europe. The core argument of this research is that the Ukrainian and Belarusian federalist projects had emerged as a reaction on the geopolitical situation between Germany and Russia, and so the making of the national territory has to be understood in the process of “imperializing nations” (as a continuation of “nationalizing empires” in 1914). The notion of imperializing nations refers to a type of process of national legitimization and creation of necessary ideological imaginations that aims for politically expanding the national state and its “own” national territories.

At the time, among national movements, there appeared a geo-politicized concept of this area, that is, the *Intermarium*, and an ethnoschematized one, that is, *Eastern Switzerland*.² I use both notions in their metaphorical sense in order to emphasize the utopian character of the Belarusian and Ukrainian federative

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1 Wiesław Kalinowski (Anton Lutskevich), *Kwestja Wschodnia a Białoruś* (Warszawa: Drukarnia Literacka, 1920), p. 4.

2 Steven Seegel, *Mapping Europe’s Borderlands. Russian Cartography in the Age of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 3.

aspirations. The idea of the Intermarium prevailed in Belarusian ideological discourse, that of Eastern Switzerland in the Ukrainian.

I aim to examine the meaning and understanding of the Ukrainian and Belarusian federalist projects by analyzing the ideological debates of statehood. This study also pays attention to the comparative analysis of the different federalist ideas in East Central Europe during the First World War and beyond.

More recent academic publications consider federalism in East Central Europe a solution to the national question.³ This thesis does not explain the theoretical characteristics and ideological perceptions of federalism. Theorists and leaders of national movements considered federalism an ideological tool for achieving current political purposes. I work out the argument that, after the proclamation of independence of the nation-states in 1918–1919, this tendency became more visible: Federalist rhetoric was used for shaping the “nationalizing” territories and “historical legitimism.” For the first time, this thesis was voiced in 1926 by the Polish legal scholar Halina Zasztowt-Sukiennicka in her dissertation, defended at the University of Paris. She concluded that national elites employ federalism as a concept for creating imaginations about their own national space;⁴ however, after the Russian revolution, the federalist idea faced nationalist sentiments and unresolved territorial conflicts.⁵ “It was a ‘vicious circle’ because diverse local features and ethnically mixed inhabitants of East European countries enforced politicians employ federalism as an identifiable political model.”⁶ Therefore, these particularities were a great barrier to the positive implementation of federalism.

THE IDEA OF THE GREAT DUCHY OF LITHUANIA AND A NEW POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

During the First World War, Vilnius was occupied by the German army in September 1915. This led to the emergence of the idea of a restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the form of a federation of Belarusian and Lithuanian lands. This idea was discussed at the Belarusian People’s Committee⁷ headed by Anton Lutskevich, an editor of Belarusian-language journals *Nasha Niva* and *Nasha dolia*.⁸ In that reality, this political attitude was a reaction to the

3 Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East-Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the ‘Long Nineteenth Century’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 512–529.

4 Halina Zasztowt-Sukiennicka, *Fédéralisme en Europe Orientale* (Paris: Université de Paris. Faculté de droit [Sciences Politiques et Économiques], 1926), p. 76.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.

7 This organization included members of the Belarusian Social-Democratic Working Group, the Vilnius Committee of the Belarusian Socialist Community, the Belarusian Relief Society for war victims, and others.

8 Aleksandra Bergman, “Antoni Łuckiewicz (1884–1946): Szkic biograficzny,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 65:4 (1974), pp. 667–695.

activity of Lithuanian nationalists who appealed to the idea of *Greater Lithuania*, and was supported by the German High Command.

The idea of the restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was first mentioned in the *Proclamation of the Provisional Council of the Confederation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*. It was a political organization of Belarusian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Jewish left-wing activists.⁹ This declaration was published in mid-December 1915,¹⁰ and prompted justification for the idea of the restoration of the Grand Duchy on the so-called land of *Ober Ost* (German Military Command on the Eastern Front [1914–1919], which also referred to the authority governing the occupied Courland, Lithuanian, and Belarusian lands).¹¹

Lithuanian conservatives, mainly Christian Democrats, and a group of Vilnius radicals had a different political position. In early January 1916, the National Committee of Lithuania approved *The Foundations of the Constitution of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*, which declared a revival of the “monarchy” and autonomy of the three ethnographic lands: Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus.¹²

However, Belarusian national activists in Vilnius focused on the idea of national independence in a common federative state with Lithuania. Anton and Ivan Lutskevichs rejected the “Polish element” in such a union. They articulated their concepts in accordance with the German *Mitteleuropa*.¹³ For the first time, this concept appeared in Friedrich Naumann’s book in 1915, denoting a pan-German geopolitical project in East Central and Southern Europe. In practice, this idea was perceived as an anti-project of the Intermarium.

The *krajowcy*, a cluster of Polish-speaking politicians and public figures from Vilnius who identified themselves as “citizens of the country” (Michał Römer, Tadas Vrublevskis, Roman Skirmunt, and others),¹⁴ considered the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Polish federalist context.

In May 1916, the Belarusian People’s Committee demanded that Polish political organizations renounce their vision of the Lithuanian country (“historical Lithuania”) (pol. *kraj*) as a Polish province in order to identify themselves as “citizens of the Grand Duchy,” and thus stop their Polonization policy.¹⁵ The

9 See A. F. Smalyanchuk, *Pamizh krayovastsyu i natsyjonal’nyay ideyay. Polski rukh na belaruskikh i litovskikh zemlyakh. 1864 – lyuty 1917 h.* (Sankt-Petsyaburh: Newski prascyah, 2004); Dorota Michaluk, Per Andres Rudling, “From the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the Belarusian Democratic Republic: The Idea of Belarusian Statehood, 1915–1919,” *The Journal of Belarusian Studies* 7:2 (2014), pp. 3–36.

10 Wiktor Sukiennicki, “Początki Ober-Ostu i sprawa konfederacji W. Ks. Litewskiego w 1915–1916,” *Zeszyty Historyczne (Paryż)* 28 (1974), p. 100.

11 Raimundas Lopata, “W kręgu projektów odrodzenia Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego.” *Litvano-Slavica Posnaniensia. Studia Historica* VIII (2001), p. 159.

12 Lopata, “W kręgu projektów,” p. 171.

13 Michaluk, Rudling, “From the Grand Duchy,” p. 12.

14 A. F. Smalyanchuk, “Farmavanne krayovay idei (pachatak XX st.): pershyya teksty i pershyya awtary,” *Palitychnaya sfera* 18/19 (2012), p. 63.

15 Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 21, vnt. 2068, lap. 4r. (protocol of the Belarusian People’s Committee, 7 May 1916).

Polish national minority could then receive equal rights to other nationalities. At the same time, Lutskevich's brothers and the Belarusian People's Committee turned to the idea of a Belarusian-Lithuanian confederation as a possible counterweight to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.¹⁶

In February 1916, the "Provisional Council of the Confederation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" issued the proclamation *To citizens! (Hramadziane!)* signed by the prominent figures of the Belarusian national movement Anton and Ivan Lutskevichs, Vaclau Lastouski, and Daminik Semashko. This document introduced the concept of an independent state on the German-occupied Belarusian and Lithuanian ethnographic territories, guaranteeing the rights of all nationalities living therein.¹⁷ It is also worth mentioning that the proclamation was intended to inform the German Military Command about the new state project that it was willing to engage in close collaboration with the Central Powers.

In response to the activities of Lithuanian nationalists and an initiative of the Congress of peoples of Russia in Lausanne in June 1916, Lutskevich voiced the idea of a "Baltic and Black Sea-Land Confederation." It was presented for the first time at the meeting of the Belarusian People's Committee. It later appeared in a paper entitled *The United States between the Baltic and Black Seas*. This union of states would comprise Lithuania, Belarus, Latvia, Ukraine, and potentially Poland. For Lutskevich, his idea was a geopolitical model for the restructuring of Eastern Europe.¹⁸ According to him, this process could begin only after the collapse of the Russian Empire.

"The Grand Duchy was an ancient Belarusian-Lithuanian state," asserted Lutskevich.¹⁹ Considering the economic side of the putative federation, he drew attention to the importance of cooperation with Latvia because then Belarus would gain access to the Baltic Sea. In the case of Ukraine and the Black Sea, he came to the same conclusion. In general, his project dealt with regional statehood, but was never a nation-state project *per se*. As a result, Lutskevich worked out the idea of "the United States between the Baltic to Black Seas," where, as he was convinced, independent Belarus would be a "union member of free neighboring peoples."²⁰

The same ideological process also took place among the *krajowcy* movement and the Polish conservatives. In September 1914, a new impetus was put behind the idea of a Belarusian-Lithuanian-Polish federation, wherein the historical Lithuania (which included Belarus) would be a sovereign state. In the

16 Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 21, vnt. 2068, lap. 6r, 14r-14v. (protocols of the Belarusian People's Committee, 21 May and 4 June 1916).

17 Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 56, l. 53. («Hramadziane!», February 1916).

18 A. Luckevich, "Referat Belaruskae delehacyi na Lyazanskoy kanferencyi narodaw Rasei," A. Luckevich, *Da historyi belaruskaga rukhu* (Smalensk: Inbelkult, 2015), pp. 78-81.

19 Luckevich, "Referat Belaruskae," p. 80.

20 Luckevich, "Referat Belaruskae," pp. 80-81.

summer of 1915, conservative Polish politicians considered various models of a possible federation with Lithuania. The majority voiced the opinion that the collapse of the Romanov empire might open an opportunity for the integration process in Eastern Europe and, thus, the restoration of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This endeavor was based on the argument of “historical rights” (that historically these lands belong to Poland) and the *antemurale* myth (Poland is a bulwark of the West on the East and defender of Latin civilization against Asian hordes).²¹ The deputy of the IV Russian State Duma Michał Łempicki argued the idea of a “federation between the Baltic and Black Seas,” which would unite Poles, Lithuanians, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Belarusians, Estonians, Latvians, and Finns.²² One of the leaders of the Polish State League, Joseph Dąmbrowski, proposed something similar: the creation of a federation of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Courland (historical region in western Latvia). In his view, this union could initiate the anti-Russian bloc in the near future. It would be possible to expand it by including Scandinavia, the Baltic states, and Hungary as well.²³

At the end of January 1915, the *krajowcy* had a more pessimistic prediction. The influential attorney and one of the leaders of the *krajowcy* movement Michał Römer expressed the impossibility of reviving the old Jagiellonian Union, and instead called for the creation of a federation: “a new Austria of the Western nations [of Russia] liberated from the Russian domination.”²⁴ He clarified that Poles and Lithuanians belonged to Western European civilization, and, for Lithuanians, such a federation might be an essential stage in the struggle for independence. To expand the putative borders of the federation from the Baltic to the Black Sea, Römer suggested that the Polish-Lithuanian federation should also include Belarus, Latvia, and Ukraine.²⁵ He ignored the economic aspect, but emphasized the importance of maintaining internal national and civil equality. In August 1915, Römer was sent to the Supreme National Committee in Kraków (pol. *Naczelny Komitet Narodowy*). The memorandum *Lithuania in the face of war* was a draft of the future political system of the lands of the former Grand Duchy. The shaping of such a federation, he pointed out, could restore the historical rights of Lithuanians and Belarusians.²⁶

In the spring of 1916, Römer reviewed the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and returned in it to the Jagiellonian Union project as a free

21 More about the *antemurale* myth: Janusz Tazbir, *Polskie przedmurze chrześcijańskiej Europy: mity a rzeczywistość historyczna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1987).

22 Jan Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie a Białorusi w latach 1905–1922* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1983), p. 153; Michał Łempicki, *Grand problème international* (Lausanne: Agence polonaise de presse à Rapperswil, 1915), p. 92.

23 Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli*, p. 153.

24 Michał Römer, *Dziennik, 1914–1915* (Warszawa: Karta, 2017), p. 234.

25 Römer, *Dziennik, 1914–1915*, p. 246.

26 “Litwa wobec wojny (poufny memoriał Michała Romera z sierpnia 1915),” publikacja W. Sukiennickiego, *Zeszyty Historyczne (Paryż)* 17 (1970) pp. 88–89.

alliance of peoples, wherein ethnographical division of territory would be eliminated.²⁷ This change in his previous point on the Jagiellonian idea was summoned by the above-mentioned “action” of the Provisional Council of “the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Confederation” in 1915. Historical Rus’ was considered an immanent part of the Polish-Lithuanian federation, but certainly not an equal. It is difficult to grasp the area of historical Rus’ he had in mind. According to the Polish perception of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, this space presumably occupied the Right Bank of Ukraine²⁸ and Kyiv. “Ancient Poland shaped freedom-loving peoples that had never had any expansionist ambitions,”²⁹ and, therefore, the former Polish-Lithuanian state was “an alliance of Polish, Ruthenian, Lithuanian, and Latvian peoples in Central Europe that fulfill the tasks of the defense of Europe in the east.”³⁰ As a bottom line, the *antemurale* myth was transformed into a significant “historical argument” and an element of federalist discourse. In general, the *krajowcy* understanding of federalism had nothing to do with real intention to shape the federative state in Eastern Europe; in reality, it was a political epigone of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

THE IDEA OF THE BELARUSIAN-UKRAINIAN FEDERATION (1918–1919)

After the February 1917 revolution, Ukrainian statehood developed as an interaction between federalist discourse and the idea of national independence. The leaders of the Ukrainian movement perceived its national territory as ethnographical land, where Ukrainians had always lived. Many of them (Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Serhii Yefremov, Andriy Zhuk, Mykola Porsh, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, and others) treated the federalization as a way to achieve Ukrainian territorial integrity.

The independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic was proclaimed during peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk on January 22, 1918. The IV Universal stated that the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly “will decide about a federative union with other People’s Republics of the former Russian empire.”³¹ Two months later, on March 25, the Third Constitutional Convention (*Hramata*) declared the independence of the Belarusian People’s Republic. This proclamation stated that “within the borders of the dwells and the numeric superiority of the Belarusian people the Belarusian People’s Republic is proclaimed.”

27 Michał Römer, “Wojna a solidarność Polski z ludami północnego wschodu,” *Wiadomości Polskie (Piotrków)* 70 (2 kwietnia 1916), p. 4.

28 The Right-Bank Ukraine is a historical name for a part of Ukrainian lands on the right (west) bank of the Dnipro River.

29 Michał Römer, “Blok ludów b. Rzeczypospolitej,” *Myśl Polska* 2:V (1916), p. 78.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

31 V. F. Verstiuk, ed., *Ukrayins'ka Tsentral'na Rada: Dokumenty i materialy*. U 2 tomakh, t. 2: 10 hrudnya 1917 r. – 29 kvitnya 1918 r. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1997), p. 104.

The Brest-Litovsk Treaty was signed on February 9, 1918, and the German occupation of Ukraine stimulated the emergence of the idea of a Belarusian-Ukrainian federation on the political horizon. However, the two republics pursued different purposes. Ukraine tried to reinforce independence under the Central Powers. Belarusian elites, on the contrary, were looking for a partner in a possible state union. Republican Ukraine was perceived as the most favored ally, but Lithuania seemed realistic. In a memorandum on January 22, 1918, Lutskevich stated that the inclusion of Belarus and Lithuania in new Russia had to be considered a defeat of these nations. Only the revival of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a dualistic state could be “our political aim.”³² Nevertheless, in February, the geopolitical situation of the Belarusian perspective changed dramatically. The Lithuanian Council (*Taryba*) declared the independence of the Kingdom of Lithuania. Although this declaration irritated the German Military Command, it certainly brought Belarusians closer to the proclamation of independence. At the time, Lithuanians did not consider any type of federal state with neighboring countries, but Belarusians regarded it as one of the most plausible solutions and ways to maintain their sovereignty.

At the end of March 1918, the Belarusian Council debated a question of “the desirability of a federation with Great Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania,”³³ and ultimately adopted a decree that can be considered a political act of federative reorientation toward Kyiv, the capital of the Ukrainian People’s Republic at the time. Informal relations between the two republics began in the spring of 1918. It is worth emphasizing that Kyiv had not yet officially recognized the Belarusian People’s Republic. The Ukrainian elites were waiting for sanctions from the German High Command. The first contact took place on April 5, 1918, when the head of the Ukrainian Central Council (*Rada*) Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Ministry of Internal Affairs Oleksandr Zhukovsky held a meeting with the Belarusian delegates in Kyiv. On April 15, the Ukrainian-Belarusian commission on the determination of the borders was established. Aliaksander Tsvikevich was appointed chairman of the Belarusian delegation, and Anastas Likhnyakevych served on the Ukrainian side.

On April 19, in the opening speech, Tsvikevich stated that “both nations will reach a fraternal association and unity in a truly short time,” and the border between the two republics must be determined according to the principle of “ethnographic differentiation.”³⁴ In doing so, the Ukrainian delegates

32 Dorota Michaluk, “Premier Białoruskiej Republiki Ludowej Antoni Łuckiewicz wobec polskich i litewskich aspiracji do Wileńszczyzny i Grodzieńszczyzny,” *Europa Orientalis. Studia z Dziejów Europy Wschodniej i Państw Bałtyckich* 2 (2010), p. 37.

33 Karotkaya spravozdacha z 4-ga pasedzhannya II sesii Rady Belaruskae Narodnae Respubliki za 29.03.1918 in: Shupa Syargey (uklad.), *Arhivy Belaruskay Narodnay Respubliki*, 1/1 (Vilnya – Nyu-York – Mensk – Praga, 1998), p. 66.

34 Protokol № 1 zasidannya predstavnykiv uryadu UNR z predstavnykamy uryadu BRN v spravi ustalennya derzhavnykh hranyc’, 19 kvitnya 1918 r. v: The Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and the Government of Ukraine (CDAVOU), f. 2592, op. 1, spr. 62, ark. 25.

proposed that their counterparts consider economic and geographical aspects. Tsvikevich insisted that both delegations had to use “the map of Yefim Karsky since 1917, and the map of Prof. Stepan Rudnytsky.”³⁵

The Karsky ethnographic map was issued in 1903, and identified Belarusian lands based on the spread of the Belarusian language. According to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the ethnographic region of Western Polesia (Brest, Pruzhany, and Kobryn districts of the Grodno province) was considered a part of Ukraine. This explains why Ukrainians wanted to bypass the language factor during the debates about future borders. Moreover, Tsvikevich, who was the leader of the Belarusian organization in Kyiv, took a pro-Ukrainian stance on many questions, and his leadership caused irritation in Minsk, the capital of the Belarusian People’s Republic.

At this point, delegations debated the “ethnographic principle” and often used historical arguments. The issue of the ethnic (ethnographic) belonging of Western Polesia as a significant “point” of the Ukrainian-Belarusian border brought negotiations to a standstill. Ukrainian negotiators rejected Karsky’s map, and their chairman suggested that the delegations use the map of Dietrich Schäfer from 1917. However, this map had been issued in May 1916 by the German High Command, namely, an occupational power.

The next meetings of the commission showed how the ethnographic principle and a cluster of historical arguments evolved into political slogans for shaping the “nationalizing” areas. Ukrainians insisted that the republic’s border had to follow the Pripyat River to the north. Belarusians, on the contrary, claimed that the territory of the Pripyat basin belonged to Belarus ethnographically and economically. For them, it was a “question of life and death.”³⁶

The ethnographic problems stiffened the resolve of Minsk’s elites. On April 22, 1918, Belarusian Foreign Minister Jazep Varonka notified the Ukrainian government that “the territory of the republic covers all areas, where Belarusian people have a numerical superiority...” Several days later, the Belarusian delegation was enlarged with Mytrofan Dovnar-Zapol’skiy, professor of history at Kyiv University, who “should bring concrete data for consideration by the commission.”³⁷ Western Polesia, ethnically and linguistically, belonged to Belarus: This was the message of the Dovnar-Zapol’skiy mission to Kyiv.

At the end of April 1918, the Belarusian delegation informed their government about the possibility of establishing a federation with Ukraine or Poland. Influential Belarusian politicians had a skeptical attitude toward Ukraine. Dovnar-Zapol’skiy demanded the negotiations in Kyiv be stopped, releasing

35 Ibid, ark. 25.

36 Protokol № II zasidannya predstavnykiv uryadu UNR z predstavnykamy uryadu BRN v spravi ustalennya derzhavnykh hranyc’, 20 kvitnya 1918 r. v: CDAVOU, f. 2592, op. 1, spr. 62, ark. 28.

37 Zvernennya holovy uryadu BNR ta narodnoho sekretarya mizhnarodnykh sprav Ya. Varonka do ministra zakordonnykh sprav UNR, 25 kvitnya 1918 r. v: CDAVOU, f. 2592, op. 1, spr. 62, ark. 20.

a statement about “Ukrainian imperialist intentions.”³⁸ At the same time, the political organization of the “Union of Independent and Undivided Belarus,” headed by Vaclau Lastouski, a member of the Belarusian Council, issued a proclamation about the necessity of creating a federative state with Ukraine.³⁹

The Minsk government had also discussed this option. Describing the German attitudes toward the Belarusian question, Lutskevich distinguished a few points: “Belarus and Lithuania do not have any connection because the Belarusian interests do not lie in the Baltic Sea area, but in Ukraine and the Black Sea region; Belarus has to reorient to the South, directly to Ukraine; and finally, Germany does not have any interests concerning an independent Belarus.”⁴⁰

In early June 1918, the Ukrainian problem arose in the next meeting of the government a “federative policy” was discussed. Belarus had to initiate the creation of a union federation in Eastern Europe. During the debates, two options were formulated: a federation with Ukraine or Lithuania. Belarus in both cases could gain access to the sea, which would have an important role in economic development. Dovnar-Zapol’skiy voiced the second option. Tsvikevich, on the contrary, characterized it as the “Germanization of Belarus.”

Ultimately, the majority of the government accepted the idea of creating a federation with Ukraine. The “closeness of the two peoples” was a core argument during the talk.⁴¹ A few days later, at the next meeting of the government, Dovnar-Zapolsky reported a meeting with a member of the Ukrainian Senate, Serhii Shelukhin. He discussed the project of a Ukrainian-Belarusian-Lithuanian federation. For reasons unknown, Ukrainian officials rejected this proposal.

The shadow of the federative idea appeared in September 1918, when Lutskevich was appointed Belarusian prime minister and the new chairman of the Belarusian delegation in Kyiv. By the autumn of 1918, none of the European states officially recognized the Belarusian People’s Republic. In October 1918, at a meeting with a Belarusian delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine and former professor at Kyiv University Otto Eichelmann suggested creating a customs union of Belarus and Ukraine. According to him, this “confederation” could have common customs borders, “two territorial armies,” and a “common foreign policy.” Eichelmann even voiced the opinion that the disputed regions in the north of Ukraine would be included in the Belarus republic.

38 Pratakol № 8 pasedzhannya Delehacyi BNR u sprave peramovaw za 23.04.1918 in: Shupa Syargey (uklad.) (1998). *Arhivy Belaruskay Narodnay Respubliki*, 1/1 (Vilnya - Nyu-York - Minsk - Praha), 121.

39 The text of the declaration: Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Vrublevskų Biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius, f. 21, f. 871, l. 8R.

40 Ibid.

41 Pratakol narady syabrow Delehacyi BNR u sprave peramovaw za 01.06.1918 in: Shupa Syargey (uklad.) (1998). *Arhivy Belaruskay Narodnay Respubliki*, 1/1 (Vilnya - Nyu-York - Minsk - Praha), p. 168.

The Belarusian negotiations in 1918 did not succeed in the determination of boundaries or the creation of a united federative state. Later, Hrushevsky, who had participated in negotiations in the spring of 1918, recalled that, at the time, the Ukrainian elites seriously discussed the plans for “the formation of a Slavic federation, which would include the Western Slavic and Balkan lands, or a federation of the Black Sea-Land.”⁴² However, in the spring of 1918, such ideas were proposed after the success of Ukrainian socialist leaders in Brest-Litovsk but had no political, geopolitical, economic, or cultural grounds.

BELARUSIAN AND UKRAINIAN FEDERALIST IDEAS AFTER 1918

The formation of the Paris Treaty system and the advance of the Red Army to Poland in 1920 caused Ukrainian and Belarusian politicians to reconsider the idea of an Eastern European federation in a new geopolitical context. It was also preceded by setbacks during the Paris Peace Conference and a disregard of the Ukrainian and Belarusian questions by the French and British elites.⁴³

The Ukrainian delegation to Paris attempted to be a legal participant in the Paris negotiations. The main goal was to reach the legal recognition of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. However, Belarusian politicians worked on the projects of a federative alliance in Eastern Europe. In January 1919, during a meeting of the Polish delegation in Paris, the Belarusian politician who represented Lithuania, Daminik Semashko, spoke of “the triangle federation” of Belarus, an “ethnographic” Lithuania and Poland.⁴⁴

The course of the Paris negotiations and eloquent anti-Belarusian rhetoric encouraged Lutskevich to prepare a proclamation to the leaders of the victorious states, namely, France, Great Britain, Italy, and the USA. In this document, he outlined the political, economic, and geopolitical reasons for the significance of implementing a federative model in Eastern Europe.⁴⁵ Lutskevich assured that if “enslaved peoples” would shape the East European federation, such a state would be based on the unity and equality among different nations.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the proclamation was never presented in Paris.

42 M. Hrushevs’kyy, “V pershiy delehacii Ukrayins’koy partii sots.-revoliutsioneriv (kviten 1919 r. – liuty 1920 r.),” *Boritiesya – poborete!* 3:51 (1920).

43 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World* (New York, NY: Random House, 2003), pp. 207–228.

44 Krystyna Gomółka, *Między Polską a Rosją: Białoruś w koncepcjach polskich ugrupowań politycznych 1918–1922* (Warszawa: Gryf, 1994), p. 36.

45 Memaryyal ab stawlenni balarusaw da mahchymae federacyi na Wskhozde Ewropy, skadzeny Antonam Luckevicham u Paryzhy, 1919 in: Shupa Syargey (uklad.) *Arhiyov Belaruskay Narodnay Respubliki*, 1/1 (Vilnya – Nyu-York – Mensk – Praha, 1998), pp. 356–358.

46 Memaryyal ab stawlenni balarusaw da mahchymae federacyi na Wskhozde Ewropy, skadzeny Antonam Luckevicham u Paryzhy, 1919 in: Shupa Syargey (uklad.) *Arhiyov Belaruskay Narodnay Respubliki*, 1/1 (Vilnya – Nyu-York – Mensk – Praha, 1998), p. 357.

In autumn 1920, Lutskevich elaborated on this idea, but now in the Polish geopolitical context. In Warsaw, under the pseudonym “Wiesław Kalinowski,” a brochure was published about the solution of the “Eastern question” and the place of Belarus in Europe. The idea of the Slavic federation as a project of Russian pan-Slavism could not be a pattern of a peaceful solution to the national question in Eastern Europe. This idea was invented by Russian nationalists and did not have any foundation in practical politics and history.⁴⁷

Lutskevich worked out the idea of “a union of states” between the Baltic and Black Seas, which comprised Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. This idea from 1920 had more similarities with the Polish concept of Intermarium (*Międzymorze*) than in his previous project from 1916.⁴⁸ Importantly, this idea was influenced by the course of the Polish-Bolshevik War and the remaking of national borders during the negotiations between Soviets and Poles in Riga. Among the Polish elites circled an idea about Eastern Europe as “a buffer zone of small states” against Russian imperialism. Lutskevich’s idea can be explained in this geopolitical context.

Lutskevich included Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Balkan countries in his federative project. The Adriatic Sea is marked as the southern border of the putative federation. In general, his project can be seen as a belated political statement. For example, he rethought the role of Poland in Eastern Europe; and approximately a year before, he was regarded as a great threat to Belarusian statehood.

Similar ideological metamorphoses have occurred in the Ukrainian national camp. In 1919, the Ukrainian diplomats discussed several federative options: the idea of a federation with Kuban, the Don region, or other “non-historical” and stateless peoples. Summarizing the meeting of the Ukrainian Diplomatic Mission in Poland in August 1919, Mykola Porsch, ambassador of Ukraine to Germany, stressed that “we are basically all federalists” and “do not reject the idea of a federation of peoples of the former Russian state.”⁴⁹ Such ideas found popularity among Ukrainian politicians who sought an ally in the fight against the Bolsheviks.

In early 1920, Hrushevsky expressed that “the declaration of independence... does not neglect the idea of a federation of the Ukrainian republic with other republics.”⁵⁰ In the summer, he examined the different ideas of the United States: the European federation, socialist federative state, and the idea of “the United States of Ukraine.” Hrushevsky suggested that Ukraine should

47 Kalinowski, *Kwestja Wschodnia a Białoruś*, p. 5.

48 See Okulewicz, Piotr, *Koncepcja “międzymorza” w myśli i praktyce politycznej obozu Józefa Piłsudskiego w latach 1918–1926* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2001).

49 Resume posiedzeń przedstawione przez p. Porsha in: Taras Hunczak, ed., *Ukraine and Poland in Documents 1918–1922* (New York: Shevchenko Scientific Society, 1983), pp. 318–319.

50 M. S. Hrushevs’kyy, “Rokovyny ukrayins’koy nezalezhnosti” M. S. Hrushevs’kyy, *Tvory: u 50 t., 4/2* (Lviv: Svit, 2013), pp. 258–259.

organize itself as a Soviet republic, a federation of republic communities (*hromada*), and, thus, introduce a democratic system (*narodovladdia*). He concluded that Ukraine could gain its territorial integrity after the introduction of the domestic federalization model.⁵¹ These two “elements” (republic communities and a democratic system) convinced him of the benefits of establishing this US government system for socialistic Ukraine. Hrushevsky first claimed that “when the joint work is in the government bodies of the lands... then the Ukrainian republic could be shaped as a federation of lands, i.e., the United States of Ukraine.” He then explained his idea: “Therefore, the question about the specific location of regions whose historical conditions are distinguished by different ethnic, economic, or cultural background, such as in Crimea, Bessarabia, and Eastern Galicia, will come to an end.”⁵²

According to him, the administrative system of “the United States of Ukraine” consists the following bodies: 1) workers and peasants’ council of the community (*hromada*); 2) local association (*volost*, city); 3) republic-land; and 4) the All-Ukrainian Congress of Councils or the Central Council (*Rada*).⁵³ Elaborating this model, Hrushevsky aimed at Ukraine’s ethnic territorial integrity. In his opinion, this could be achieved after proving that Ukrainians in each area made up the majority of the inhabitants. It was a path for creating an imperializing nation.

In the summer of 1920, this new tendency was fully captured in the project of the federalization of Ukraine, authored by Otto Eichelmann.⁵⁴ The Ukrainian scholar proposed the division of the republic into “lands-states” (*zemli-krainy*). The land state would maintain a part of sovereignty. The political system included the local federal body, a federal parliament, a federal administration, the federal Council of Ministers, and a federal court.⁵⁵

It was a federative project of Eastern Switzerland: The land as an administrative entity and government body had the same level of sovereignty and competence as a canton. Eichelmann’s project was discussed at the Constitutional Commission of the Ukrainian government, but was ultimately rejected as unrealistic.

In March 1921, after the defeat of the “Winter campaign” of the Ukrainian Army against the Red Army, the idea of a union of the Black Sea States appeared. It was worked out among the fellows of Symon Petliura, who was the Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Army and the leader of the Ukrainian

51 M. Hrushevs’kyy, “Ukrayins’ka partiia sotsialistiv-revolutsioneriv ta yiyi zavdannya: Zamitky z pryvodu debat na konferencyakh zakordonnykh chleniv partii,” *Boritsya-poborete!* 1 (1920), pp. 1–51.

52 Hrushevs’kyy, *Ukrayins’ka partiia sotsialistiv-revoliutsioneriv*, pp. 43–44.

53 Hrushevs’kyy, *Ukrayins’ka partiia sotsialistiv-revoliutsioneriv*, p. 43.

54 Otto Eikhel’man, *Proekt Konstytucii – osnovnykh derzhavnykh zakoniv Ukrayins’koy Narodn’oy Respubliky* (Kyiv – Tarniv, 1921), p. 96.

55 CDAVOU, f. 3382, op. 1, pap. 14, ark. 182.

People's Republic at the time. Eichelmann prepared a memorandum for restoration of the Russian democratic state.⁵⁶ Its text was ideologically based on Wilson's fourteen points, highlighting the importance of the right to national self-determination. It had two variants of rebuilding the former Russian Empire: The first was a "union of independent states" with the preservation of the sovereignty of each member. This union would be under the legal control of the League of Nations. The second was the contradictory idea of a "one and an undivided" federation.⁵⁷

In April 1921, by the proposal of Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Nikovsky, the government adopted the *Instruction on the Preparation and Organization of the Union of the Black Sea States*.⁵⁸ According to this document, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Don, Kuban, Terek, and representatives of the Russian Political Committee headed by Boris Savinkov had to be included in the process of shaping the union. In general, the idea endeavored to create an anti-Bolshevik front in Eastern Europe. It is also clear that the idea of the Black Sea Union of States was based on the Polish doctrine of the Intermarium, rather than on the Ukrainian plans for the Black Sea-Land federation in the spring of 1918.

CONCLUSIONS

The First World War radically changed the intellectual and political climate of the Ukrainian and Belarusian national movements. In proposing federalism as a possible solution for the creation of a nationalizing state, Belarusian and Ukrainian politicians had advocated this solution from an attitude of ideological weakness and geopolitical preferences. The Belarusian and Ukrainian federalist projects had a common feature: They proclaimed temporary loyalty to national minorities or neighboring countries, on the one hand, but aimed for *Staatenbund* as a nation-state on the other.

In 1914, Belarusian and Lithuanian politicians debated federalist ideas in the context of the reorganization of the Russian empire. After 1916, they shifted to thinking about their own national areas. This development was closely related to the German occupation of Belarusian and Lithuanian lands and the creation of *Ober Ost*. Belarusian and Lithuanian politicians naïvely believed that the German Military Command would be willing to accept their national demands. Polish conservatives, *krajowcy*, and the Belarusian oppositionists argued for projects of the restoration of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The first group adhered to the idea of a federation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, wherein historical Lithuania including Vilnius would be one

56 CDAVOU, f. 3382, op.1, pap. 14, ark. 287.

57 CDAVOU, f. 3382, op. 1, pap. 14, ark. 288.

58 Oleh Pavlyshyn, "Z dokumentiv dyplomatii Ukrayins'koy Narodn'oy Respubliky 1920–1921 rr.: Dohovir mizh UNR i Kubanskym Krayem ta ideya Soyuzu Prychornomors'kykh Derzhav," *Problemy vyvchennya istorii Ukrayins'koy revolyutsii 1917–1921* 9 (2013), pp. 383–398.

of its foundations. The second, contrariwise, presented a narrow option, offering the idea of a Lithuanian-Belarusian federation.

Negotiations between the Ukrainian and Belarusian republics in spring 1918 illustrate an expansionistic understanding of historical arguments and territorial claims. The idea of the Ukrainian-Belorussian federation never materialized as a result, but remained a tool for pursuing a specific political goal. From April 1918 onward, relations between Ukraine and Belarus deteriorated. Some Ukrainian officials had suggested considering the draft of a Belarusian-Ukrainian-Lithuanian federation or the confederation in the form of a customs union. In December 1918, an unknown official from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry again proposed the creation of a federation with Ukraine.

After 1918, all federalist projects emerged as an ideological response to the geopolitical situation between Germany and Russia. Based on imperializing nations (as a continuation of nationalizing empires in 1914), the Belarusian and Ukrainian national leaders rhetorically accepted the formula of federalization without profoundly thinking about its further implementation. The central goal was a national state employing elements of contradictory political systems, merely to secure nationalized territorial integrity. Anton Lutskevich and Mykhailo Hrushevsky were willing to introduce the federative system for their countries, but only if Lithuania and Eastern Galicia or Belarusian lands became part of their nation-states. Analogously, Michał Römer also accepted the formula of federalization on the condition that Belarus and Lithuania became parts of a revived Poland.⁵⁹ In sum, these examples prove that the federalist idea developed without any degree of mutual consent, but served in each concrete situation merely as a response to political circumstances.

59 Włodzimierz Borodziej, Brzostek, Błażej "Górny, Maciej Polnische Europa-Pläne des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts in Duchhardt, Heinz; Morawiec, Malgorzata; Romsics, Ignac; Borodziej, Włodzimierz," *Option Europa. Deutsche, polnische und ungarische Europapläne des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 1 Bde (Göttingen: Verlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), pp. 43–134.