

***The Historical Experience of Federalism
in East Central Europe***

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The prospect of the admission of the formerly communist countries of East Central Europe into the European Union has cast the historical experience of the peoples of the area with federalism into a new and potentially disturbing light. How well has that experience prepared them for membership in the 20th century's most successful confederation and likely the centerpiece of the emerging post-Cold War international order on the Continent? In particular, how has the fate and impact of federalist ideas and institutions in the region influenced the candidates' readiness to enter an interstate structure which requires from its members a substantial surrender of sovereignty? And how has their historical experience shaped their aptitude at the kind of international cooperation that is indispensable to keep the EU functioning?

In assessing the record of federalism in East Central Europe, too narrow a definition of the term ought to be resisted. The primary subject of this inquiry is interstate federalism, which is distinguished from the intrastate variety by both its motives and its thrust; rather than to curb the excesses of centralism and state power, it aims to contain nationalism and prevent international anarchy. Yet the overwhelming majority of the historical antecedents have been federations as vehicles for the assertion of group rights within states rather than for the preservation of peace between states. Downgrading the importance of the former in favor of the latter would result in a badly distorted picture.

Rightly or wrongly, the distinction between the two types of union - federation (*Bundesstaat*) and confederation (*Staatenbund*) - has often been blurred in peoples' minds. And since groupings of both kinds have not infrequently influenced each other drawing too sharp a line between them can likewise be misleading. The European Union, too, influences the internal affairs of their member states in countless ways, regardless of the preservation of their sovereignty. It claims the right, for example, to protect minorities by ensuring the passage of appropriate national legislation of either federalist nature or

providing for autonomy. Although autonomy differs from federation, the two are so closely interrelated that strivings for autonomy cannot be left out of the discussion either, particularly not in view of their contentious history in as ethnically heterogeneous an area as East Central Europe. Thus, the scope of inquiry is much larger than suggested by a narrow definition of federalism; at issue is the proper selection of what is relevant to the subject.

Before the Age of Nationalism: The German Empire and the Polish Commonwealth

Invoking historical antecedents is risky; often those invoked are historical curiosities with scant relevance to the different times.¹ Such is the case, for example, of the 1335 Visegrád agreement, chosen to bestow the blessing of history on the 1991 decision of the heads of state of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to link their countries by regular consultation and cooperation in matters of common interest. The original agreement was an obscure dynastic deal which, as was customary at the time, ignored the people while proving the monarchs' inability to collaborate for any length of time.² No sooner was it concluded than it fell apart - as did, too, its latter-day namesake after but a few years.

Similarly, the 16th-century plan of the Czech king George of Podiebrad for a league of Europe's Christian monarchs against their common Ottoman enemy, sometimes depicted as something of a precursor of united Europe - was, if anything, the opposite. An attempt by the ruler of a heretical country to break its international isolation, the plan elicited little support, thus highlighting Europe's division rather than its unity.³ Nor did the religious thrust of the proposed alliance prevent the split between Catholics and Protestants from climaxing a century later in what was until then the Continent's most devastating war.

The two federal models antedating the age of nationalism that are most germane to the theme of East Central Europe's integration in a wider Europe have retrospectively commanded little admiration: the Holy Roman Empire, with its successor Germanic Confederation, and the Polish Commonwealth. Yet, not only did they prove remarkably durable - the former lasted a thousand years, the latter three centuries - but also left behind constructive legacies that have tended to be overshadowed by their familiar deficiencies.

The medieval German empire anticipated the latter-day united Europe in its constitutional arrangements of often bewildering complexity which, by applying the principle of dual allegiance, were designed to allow independent entities to prosper by submitting to the authority of the emperor while preserving their separate identity. The

¹ Of the two brief surveys of federalism in the history of east central Europe, the former attributes greater importance to the pre-nationalist antecedents than the latter: Oskar Halecki, "Federalism in the History of East Central Europe," *Polish Review*, summer 1960: 5-19; Rudolf Wierer, "Der Föderalismus bei den kleinen und mittleren slawischen Völkern," *Der Donauraum* 4, no. 1 (1959): 3-16.

² Jean W. Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000-1500* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), p. 355.

³ Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King: Bohemia in European Affairs, 1440-1471* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), pp. 152-60.

status of the Czech principality and later kingdom of Bohemia was a case in point which left an indelible mark on the Czech-German relationship for centuries to come.⁴

Of the non-Germanic peoples of East Central Europe who formed states in the Middle Ages, the Czechs shared most extensively in the development of the Empire. For most of the period, their ruler was a privileged vassal of the emperor, eventually becoming one of the seven imperial electors and, in the 14th century in the persons of Charles IV and his two sons, even the emperor himself. Charles made Prague his capital city and one of Europe's premier cultural centers at the time, before the Hussite revolution and its aftermath rendered the constitutional connection with Germany tenuous. Even then, the Empire remained for the Czechs, more than for other Slavs, the gateway to western Europe.

During the Empire's long existence, but especially once its decline began, the complexity of its problems challenged the minds of some of the leading theoreticians of federalism, such as Johannes Althusius or Johann Stephan Pütter. Yet much of the voluminous writing about German federalism remained excessively preoccupied with its legal dimensions at the very time when, following the religious division that split the venerable structure apart, its preservation became mainly a question of the political will of its constituent parts, whose full sovereignty was recognized in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Looking beyond an Empire whose days had already been numbered, the philosopher Immanuel Kant grasped the central contribution federalism could make to the maintenance of peace and order among nations. "The law of nations," he insisted, "shall be founded on a federation of free states."⁵

The "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" sought to define the place among nations of Europe's largest but most fragmented territorial unit. The plans for its federalist reform and the evolution since the early 19th century of the Germanic confederation as its successor have usually been viewed within the context of the movement for German unity, and rightly so. Federalist traditions antedating the unification remained an important part of the German political and legal heritage, never to be extinguished by the authoritarian and totalitarian rulers who successively governed the unified country. After World War II, those traditions provided a receptive soil for the absorption of federalist concepts of the Anglo-American variety in Western Germany, triumphing in the eminently successful synthesis implemented in the Federal Republic.

The other historical model, that of the Polish Commonwealth, resulted from the transformation of a conventional dynastic union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the conclusion in 1569 of the treaty of Lublin evolved into a confederation which preserved the identity of its constituent units while maintaining common features. Besides the figurehead king, these included compatible laws, common diet, common foreign policy.

The arrangement was attractive and potentially beneficial to neighbors. In 1658 the minority of westernized Cossacks attempted to bring the Ukraine into the Commonwealth

⁴ Ferdinand Seibt, *Deutschland und die Tschechen: Geschichte einer Nachbarschaft in der Mitte Europas* (Munich: List, 1974), pp. 41-83.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992), p. 128

as its third constituent member but did not succeed.⁶ Afterward their rivals turned to Russia, leading to its annexation of the country. Most Ukrainians came to regard this as a historical misfortune, which it took more than three hundred years to undo.

The Polish-Lithuanian aristocratic republic was unparalleled in contemporary Europe, except for the union between England and Scotland. Like in Great Britain, its constitution was made possible by the weakness of the royal power; unlike there, however, the nobility comprising the political nation amounted to a significant segment of the population by the standards of the time - about 10 percent or a million persons. Within this large group, political discourse was rife, much attention being paid to such subjects of impeccable modernity as safeguards against the abuse of state power, preservation of minority rights, and power-sharing.⁷

The hallmark of the Polish-Lithuanian state was the length to which it went in trying to protect individual and group rights within the confederation. Ultimately, its inability to find the right balance brought it down. But during the three centuries it lasted, the Commonwealth went farther than other contemporary state in addressing the practical problems of federalism until the North American colonies took the lead and created the United States as a new model. But the circumstances were too unique for the model to be easily imitated. East Central Europeans became captivated by American democracy, freedom, and prosperity, not federalism; *The Federalist Papers* did not become the required reading even of their educated elites.

Although Poland ceased to exist as a state in 1795, it continued to maintain a political discourse richer than any European nation east of Germany. The problem of how to reconcile nationalism with federalism preoccupied the political elite in its quest for the restoration of an independent Poland in a congenial Europe.⁸ After the failure of the uprising of 1830, the leading figure of the Great Emigration, Adam Czartoryski, elaborated in his Paris exile proposals for the organization of the Continent designed to protect the small nations and ensure their vital contribution to common European good.⁹ He disseminated his thoughts through his extensive international contacts. In envisaging confederations based on nationalism, Czartoryski echoed the ideas of one of the fathers of Italian unity, Giuseppe Mazzini, about the necessary fulfillment of national aspirations as a precondition for the voluntary association of the peoples of the Continent – ideas anticipating the process through which European unity would evolve in the following century.¹⁰ Czartoryski influenced the 1844 *Nacertanije* by Serbian foreign minister Ilija Garasanin which proposed the establishment of a Slav federation with Serbia

⁶ Władysław Konopczyński, *Dzieje Polski nowożytnej* [A history of Modern Poland], vol. 2 (Warsaw: Gebethner and Wolff, 1936), pp. 35-40.

⁷ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 321-72.

⁸ Piotr S. Wandycz, "The Polish Precursors of Federalism," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 12 (1952-53): 346-55; Sławomir Kalemka, ed., *Wielka Emigracja I sprawa Polska a Europa, 1832-1864* [The Great Emigration and the Polish Question in Europe] (Torun: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika).

⁹ Marian Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Vojtech Mastny, "Italy and East Central Europe: The Legacy of History," in *Italy and East Central Europe: Dimensions of the Regional Relationship* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 1-16, at 5-7.

as its core – the controversial debit of Balkan federalism, indicating both its promise and its main problem.¹¹

The Multinational Monarchies: Unattractive Models

Long after the medieval affiliation of the Czechs with the Holy Roman Empire had ended, the issue of their participation in a new federal state dominated by Germans was revived in 1848 by the Frankfurt constituent assembly seeking to replace the Austrian-dominated Germanic confederation by something more desirable and modern. The project was a liberal and nationalist undertaking, and the participation was rejected on both grounds by the conservative Czech leader František Palacký.¹² His reply to the Frankfurt parliament showed how much Kant's postulate of a federalism of free states had been superseded by yearning for states, federal or otherwise, whose primary purpose would be the satisfaction of national aspirations.¹³ According to Palacký, federalism applied only to internal, not international law. In his view, its purpose was not a union of states but rather the devolution to nationalities of all the power that was not indispensable for a state to maintain its unity.¹⁴

Palacký elaborated these ideas at the Kremsier constitutional convention, where representatives of different nationalities of the Austrian Habsburg monarchy sought to respond to their Frankfurt counterparts by reorganizing it in a manner accommodating both the old local privileges of its component territorial units and the new national aspirations of its diverse peoples.¹⁵ Trying to reconcile the historic political units with the desire for national unity and self-government was what federalism in East Central Europe was about during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. The constitution drafted at Kremsier may have been the most promising attempt to transform the Austrian empire into a federation acceptable to its different nationalities. Yet it was never implemented, as was none of the numerous later schemes aimed at achieving that goal.

Instead, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 was designed to satisfy but one of the discontented nationalities – the Magyars. Consisting of only two, very unequal members, the resulting Dual Monarchy was a dubious federation, which made the establishment of a genuine one that much more difficult.¹⁶ Since sovereignty remained vested in the emperor, it was not a confederation either, regardless of the common institutions established to handle the monarchy's foreign affairs, defense, and finances. There was a gross imbalance between the ethnically more diverse and more tolerant Austrian part and the historic Kingdom of Hungary, where the preponderant ruling

¹¹ Leften S. Stabrianos, *Balkan Federation: A History of the Movement toward Balkan Unity in Modern Times* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1944), pp. 51-52, 63-64.

¹² Lewis B. Namier, *The Revolution of Intellectuals* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 91-92.

¹³ Franz Palacký, *Gedenklätter: Auswahl von Denkschriften, Aufsätzen und Briefen* (Prague: Tempsky, 1874), pp. 148-55.

¹⁴ Rudolf Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Kegan Paul, 1945), p. 171.

¹⁵ Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 311-13.

¹⁶ William A. Jenks, "Economics, Constitutionalism, Administrative and Class Structure in the Monarchy," *Austrian History Yearbook* 3, part 1 (1967): 32-61, at pp. 34-35, 49-50.

nationality could afford more easily to assert its privileges without corresponding responsibilities at the expense of weaker ethnic groups.

In a subsidiary compromise a year later, the Magyars granted some privileges to the Croats, but not to anyone else, successfully resisting any reform of the Dual Monarchy that would give a status equal to their own to any of its other nationalities, notably the Czechs.¹⁷ While the Austrian government extended a measure of autonomy to the Poles in Galicia, the Magyars blocked anything similar that would benefit the southern Slavs or Romanians, as the Austrians also did in regard to their Italian minority. As the frustrations of these irredentist groups strained Austria-Hungary's relations with its neighboring states – Serbia, Romania, Italy – its flawed federalism became a prescription for international instability. It helped precipitate the tragic sequence of events leading to the outbreak of World War I.

A response to the defeat of Austria by Prussia in the war of 1866, the quasi-federal reorganization of the Habsburg monarchy was an unhappy byproduct of the process of German unification, which excluded East Central Europe. It was a constitutional arrangement difficult to imitate and unworthy of imitation. Its two later imitations were acts of desperation undertaken under duress, and fared accordingly. One was the “second” republic of Czecho-Slovakia, formed in 1938 after the catastrophic Munich agreement to appease the Slovaks, that lasted five months; the other was the 1939 *Sporazum*, by which the Serb-dominated Yugoslav government tried to accommodate the independence-minded Croats, that disintegrated under the German attack the following year.¹⁸ If the bygone monarchy merits the nostalgia that it has been more recently generating among the latter-day descendants of its peoples, this could possibly be justified only by its comparison with the dismal regimes that followed it rather than by any compelling merits of its constitutional setup.

In contrast, the restricted but real federal system of the Second German Reich, designed to ensure the preponderance of Prussia by giving it greater weight than all the other constituent units combined, did represent a model that was later followed, if only by disreputable regimes. It was successfully borrowed by Stalin in making the Soviet Union a vehicle of Russian predominance, and not so successfully by Slobodan Milošević in trying to achieve the same for Serbia in post-Tito Yugoslavia. Unlike these two dictatorships, however, pre-World War I Germany was despite all its deficiencies a state based on the rule of law, which allowed federalism to function within clearly set limits, thus ensuring its vital continuity.¹⁹

By allowing, however imperfectly, for the articulation of the particular interests of its component parts, both Central European monarchies differed from Russia, whose autocratic system precluded even a hint of federalism.²⁰ The mutually satisfactory position

¹⁷ Charles Jelavich, “The Croatian Problem in the Habsburg Empire in the Nineteenth Century,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 3, part 2 (1967): 83-115 at pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ Theodor Prochazka, *The Second Republic: The Disintegration of Post-Munich Czechoslovakia, October 1938 - March 1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 154-55, 169, 198.

¹⁹ Ernst Deuerlein, *Föderalismus: Die historischen und philosophischen Grundlagen des föderativen Prinzips* (Munich: List, 1972), pp. 116-54.

²⁰ In the four-volume publication by R. G. Abdulatipov, L. F. Boltenkova, and Iu. F. Iarov, *Federalizm v istorii Rossii* [Federalism in the History of Russia] (Moscow: Respublika, 1992-3), the term is stretched

of Finland within the otherwise overbearing tsarist state entailed autonomy, not a federal relationship. Nor did the similarly oppressive Ottoman empire allow for the rise of such relationships in the Balkans. And the politics of the newly independent states that emerged from its shambles were too rudimentary to nurture the kind of subtlety necessary to develop a commitment to federalism. Hence also the agents of the French and Piedmontese governments who in 1850 approached the Hungarian revolutionaries as well as the Romanian prince Alexander Cuza with the proposal of a Danubian confederation were bound to be disappointed.²¹

The late 19th and early 20th-century imperialism, with its propensity for social Darwinism and jingoism, was not hospitable to the progress of federalism – a fruit of tolerance and a readiness to compromise. Besides free-traders, whose campaigning against tariff barriers and for common markets sometimes had a federalist thrust which the ascendant protectionism had not, the main proponents of federal solutions to contemporary political and social problems were the opposition Social Democrats. The 1879 proposal by French economist G. de Molinari for a sweeping mid-European customs union comprising countries from France through Austria-Hungary, inspired by the success of the Prussian Zollverein as the harbinger of German unification, foreshadowed the pattern by which a hundred years later European unity would grow from the Common Market.²² Social Democrats, drawing on the federalist thrust of early French socialism, were responsible for some of the most imaginative plans for the restructuring of Austria-Hungary. These included Karl Renner's design for a federal state based on the principle of personality rather than territorial division, which in another hundred years would seem briefly relevant for the possible reorganization of postcommunist multiethnic states, notably the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.²³

Apart from the "Austromarxists," Marxism did not unequivocally lean toward federalism. Friedrich Engels did favor the restoration of the Polish state as a federation of Poles, Lithuanians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians.²⁴ But Rosa Luxemburg and other radical Polish socialists regarded any restitution of the multiethnic Poland as economically, and hence also politically, retrogressive.²⁵ In tsarist Russia, the lone advocates of a federal solution to its nationality problems were the anarchist-oriented Social Revolutionaries

so far as to amount to nothing less than the manner in which the heterogeneous Russian state has been governed ever since the Middle Ages.

²¹ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 332.

²² Henry Cord Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action 1815-1945* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955), pp. 58-66. The applicability of the Zollverein model for later European integration is questioned by Rolf H. Duhmke, "Der Deutsche Zollverein als Modell ökonomischer Integration," in *Wirtschaftliche und politische Integration in Europa im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Berding (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), pp. 71-101.

²³ Rudolf Wierer, *Der Föderalismus im Donauraum* (Graz: Böhlau, 1960), pp. 104-11; Hans Mommsen, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage im habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Vienna: Europa, 1963).

²⁴ N. Rjasanoff, "Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels über die Polenfrage," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung I* (1916): pp. 175-221.

²⁵ J. P. Nettle, *Rosa Luxemburg* (Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 500-19.

rather than the Social Democrats,²⁶ whose faction led by the Bolsheviks rejected such a solution as incompatible with the concept of a dictatorship of the proletariat they hoped to exercise in its name through a centralistic revolutionary party. Their leader, Lenin, wrote a vitriolic pamphlet *On the Slogan of the United States of Europe*, in which he lambasted the idea as a capitalist ploy.²⁷

World War I brought an upsurge of federalist thinking, though not before the senselessness of the slaughter and its catastrophic disruption of international order became evident, and even then only among a thoughtful minority. In 1915, the *Mitteleuropa* by chastened German nationalist Friedrich Naumann became an instant bestseller – and was immediately attacked by both Slav nationalists and their German counterparts for different reasons.²⁸ The former decried it as a manifesto of the German *Drang nach Osten*, the latter as a prospectus for a sellout to the Slavs.²⁹ Naumann's problem – and his claim to fame – was in coming much too early in prophesying the primacy of a democratic, tolerant, and generous Germany in a prosperous central Europe of like-minded nations exercising their self-determination in mutual economic integration and political cooperation.

Rather than on any federal institutional structure, Naumann proposed to rely on an interstate network of boards and committees (awkwardly referred to as *Oberstaat*) supervising common projects in a manner which would allow the representatives of different nations to gradually acquire the habits of cooperation. Yet prescient as he was of the road that Germany's eastern neighbors would eventually take to united Europe, Naumann remained prisoner of his narrowly Central European outlook. Not only did this German patriot expect the region's happiness to grow out of the victory in the war by his country and Austria-Hungary – whose political systems he wanted to be liberalized but otherwise preserved – but he also envisaged high tariff walls that would protect the German-dominated economic zone from the rest of Europe. As a passionate advocate of mutual understanding and partnership between Germans and other Central Europeans, he nonetheless stood out as a man with an inspiring vision of the future at a time when the horizon of his critics was still limited by prejudices inherited from the past.

From World War I to World War II: Reluctant Federalists

Founded in the year after the publication of Naumann's book and dedicated to the rejection of his liberal concept of postwar Europe, the journal *New Europe* edited by the leader of the Czech exiles Thomas G. Masaryk and his Scottish supporter R. W. Seton-Watson, promoted an obstructionist alternative that was both retrogressive and short-sighted: a vindictive international order perpetuating a division between the victors and the vanquished. Although a convinced democrat, Masaryk had ambivalent feelings about liberalism, which he associated with the centralistic nationalism of Austrian Germans,

²⁶ Oliver H. Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism: Promise and Default of the Russian Social Revolutionaries, February to October, 1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 37-40.

²⁷ Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress, 1960), pp. 339-43.

²⁸ Friedrich Naumann, *Central Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1917).

²⁹ Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action*, pp. 194-214.

while federalism reminded him of the efforts to salvage Austria-Hungary, the state he sought to destroy.³⁰

In October 1918, Masaryk with other East Central European exiles initiated in Philadelphia the Democratic Mid-European Union with the intention "to replace the German plan of Mittel-Europa by a positive plan of organization of the many small nations located between the Germans and the Russians";³¹ within weeks, however, the project fell victim to mutual bickering. The future Czechoslovak president understood that a successful federation presupposed the freely exercised will of its constituents, but did not actively promote it.³² Later on he showed benevolent interest in the plans of the Austrian proponent of "pan-European" federalism Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, but did not regard them any less utopian than did most of his contemporaries.³³

The only federal entity that emerged in post-World War I East Central Europe was, besides Weimar Germany, the diminished Austria – now ethnically the most homogeneous of the Dual Monarchy's successor states. Its system of largely self-governing *Länder* was primarily designed to foster the country's cohesion by ensuring a balance between the oversized working-class metropolis of Vienna and the rural provinces, some of which have preferred going separate ways; Vorarlberg, for example, wanted to join the neighboring Swiss federation. The system served its limited goal fairly well, although all decisions of any importance were made at the national level.³⁴

In contrast to Austria, the ethnically most diverse heirs of the defunct monarchy – Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – opted for variants of centralism. The occasional talk of their politicians of applying in their countries the Swiss cantonal system – a product of centuries of organic development in a relatively isolated part of Europe – was that much wishful thinking, or else pulling wool over the eyes of their publics. The Czech-dominated Prague government soon abandoned the faint federalist impulse underlying the wartime Pittsburgh agreement between Masaryk and the representatives of Slovak Americans, which had expressed the intent to give Slovakia an unspecified form of autonomy. The unfulfilled agreement thus became a rallying cry of Slovak nationalists.³⁵ In never seriously considering either federation or autonomy as ways toward a solution of its perhaps insoluble structural problems, Czechoslovakia was the true heir of the old Austria, whose fate it would eventually share by disappearing from the map.

The representatives of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes who in 1918 launched their National Council in Zagreb agreed on the creation of a common state but not the manner

³⁰ Roman Szporluk, *The Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 92, 115-16.

³¹ Memorandum by Masaryk to Woodrow Wilson, November 1, 1918, quoted in Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action*, p. 340.

³² Thomas G. Masaryk, *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972), p. 77.

³³ Richard Prazák, ed., *T. G. Masaryk a třetní Evropa* [T. G. Masaryk and Central Europe] (Prague, 1994).

³⁴ Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 248-74.

³⁵ Carol S. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918-1987* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 152-53.

of its constitution.³⁶ They never spelled out clearly the terms the future relationship of their very different peoples, who had never lived in a common state before and inhabited an ethnically thoroughly mixed territory. It remained undecided whether the ensuing "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" was a union of three sovereign entities or an extension of the Serbian state. In any case, the dominant Serbs were not prevented from enforcing a centralistic system of government, in turn encouraging the disillusioned Croats to entertain federative schemes of doubtful viability.

The most prominent of Croat politicians, the erratic leader of the Peasant Party Stjepan Radic, flirted with the Communist International, endorsing its call for a Balkan Federation.³⁷ This was Moscow's scheme to undermine the integrity of the anti-Soviet Balkan states by agitating their many minorities while invoking proletarian internationalism as the answer to their needs. When Radic was shot to death in the Yugoslav parliament, King Alexander's first impulse was to offer the Croats complete separation from the state rather than think harder about how a federal solution might be applied to save its unity. On second thought, however, he introduced a still more centralistic system, thus perpetuating Croat disaffection.

Restoration of the old Polish Commonwealth in a new form figured prominently in Poland's political discussion after the achievement of its independence in 1918, although of the two main parties only Marshal Józef Pilsudski's Polish Socialist Party, not the conservative National Democracy, wanted to federated with other peoples. Yet again, no serious effort was undertaken to decide what such a union should look like. When in 1919 Pilsudski seized by force the Lithuanian capital of Vilno, he remained notably silent about any federation. Since his advocacy of it never matured into any theory, much less a program, his claim to fame as a "European federalist" is specious.³⁸

The prevailing nationalism in east central Europe's post-World War I successor states dimmed the prospects of federative arrangements among them. As Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš pertinently, though not regretfully, observed, the Danubian peoples had an "instinctive aversion" to such arrangements because of their being reminded of their experiences in Austria-Hungary – the previously subject nationalities of their oppression, the former dominant ones of threats to their domination.³⁹ Hence also the "Little Entente" between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, of which Benes was a chief architect, was designed as no more than a loose confederation lest it infringe on the jealously guarded sovereignty of its member states, thus making it a poor instrument of their common policy in the event of crisis.⁴⁰

The Little Entente originated as an attempt at an alliance against a common but secondary enemy – the revisionist Hungary – by states which each had a different great

³⁶ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 146-57.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-19; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), pp. 221-22.

³⁸ The claim is promoted in M. Kamil Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski: A European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969).

³⁹ Edward Benes, speech of March 21, 1934, *Documents on International Affairs, 1934*, ed. John W. Wheeler-Bennett and Stephen Heald (London: Oxford University Press, 1935). pp. 274-91, at p. 285.

⁴⁰ Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances, 1926-1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 89, 129, 174.

power as its primary adversary: Czechoslovakia Germany, Yugoslavia Italy, and Romania the Soviet Union. With the unimportant exception of the short Czechoslovak-Romanian border, however, their territories were not contiguous, thus making effective defense planning all but impossible. Economically the members of the grouping were competitors, and little effort was made to regulate their competition. They proved reluctant to proceed toward creating common institutions and collaborate on any but the least contentious matters. Not surprisingly, the Little Entente had never been seriously put to test before it crumbled in the harsh international climate of the nineteen-thirties.

Eastern Europe's most lasting, if phony, federation was formed after World War I by the world's self-proclaimed outlaw state, Soviet Russia. Although the Russian Bolsheviks had ruled out a federal reorganization of the tsarist empire, their chief strategist, Lenin, genuinely abhorred what he condemned as "Great Russian chauvinism." His declarations about the new kind of relations that ought to be established after the empire's downfall between its diverse peoples invoked the kind "federalism" which the French revolutionaries at the end of the 18th century understood as a brotherly association of the liberated people without paying much attention to its institutional expression. The Bolsheviks avoided a clarification of what else their federalism might mean; once they came to power, however, they made it sufficiently clear what it did not mean: any substantive devolution of power.⁴¹

Lenin underwent a change of heart after exasperating negotiations with the Georgian communists about the manner of associating their land with Soviet Russia, in effect endorsing the concept of Stalin, the party's supposed expert on nationality questions.⁴² Stalin regarded federalism as little more than window dressing that could help divert nationalism in a harmless direction, thus making the country safe for centralism. Whatever the differences between these two accomplished practitioners of power politics, both Lenin and Stalin made no secret about their considering a federal system as merely a "transitional form to the complete unity of the toilers of the various nations."⁴³

This was the frame of mind from which originated in 1922 the Soviet Union, officially called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with its heartland designated as the "Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic." Yet what was founded as an allegedly transitory form came to last as a convenient framework for the exercise of Stalin's tyranny, once the Bolsheviks abandoned their early illusions about the spread of their revolution abroad and embraced his concept of "socialism in one country."

The more the revolutionary regime degenerated into personal despotism, the more did it pay lip service to federalism. Stalin enhanced its trappings in the Soviet Constitution of 1936, the year his terror reached its climax, even proclaiming the constituent republics' right to separation.⁴⁴ In practice, the system allowed the despot to better avail himself of willing executioners of his policies from among non-Russian party ranks of these nominal

⁴¹ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-23* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 242-47, 280-82.

⁴² Richard Pipes, "The Establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," in *The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context*, ed. Rachel Denber (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 35-86.

⁴³ Vladimir I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, vol. 10 (New York: International Publishers, 1938), pp. 233-34.

⁴⁴ Gregory Gleason, "The Evolution of the Soviet Federal System," in Denber, *The Soviet Nationality Reader*, pp. 107-20.

republics, thus tainting them with complicity in his crimes and making the coalescence of nationalist opposition that much more difficult. Little did he suspect that in the fullness of time the hapless republics, whose status and boundaries he manipulated with utter cynicism, would provide the framework along which the Soviet Union would split and finally disintegrate into real states.

Like the communists, the fascists opposed federalism because of their totalitarian ambitions; unlike the communists, they at least did not pretend otherwise. After the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, Hitler made the liquidation of the residual self-government in its historic provinces one of his first priorities.⁴⁵ During World War II, the Nazi propaganda of the "New Order" appealed to European unity without any trace of federalism, extolling in nebulous terms the future benefits that the racially proper inhabitants of the Continent would presumably enjoy under German tutelage.⁴⁶

Accordingly, federalism became one of the mainsprings of the movement of European unity promoted by the wartime resistance movements in the Western countries under German occupation. The disunity of the Continent nations that the Fascist aggressors had been able to exploit to their advantage and the failure of the League of Nations to stop them, helped to make interstate rather than intrastate federalism the top priority for the first time, particularly in thinking about the postwar order. The leading minds of the French resistance considered European integration on a federalist basis as a way toward the resolution of the German question, thus removing once and for all Franco-German enmity as a threat to peace.⁴⁷ According to the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain, a federated Germany was necessary for a federated Europe.⁴⁸

Farther east, however, the federalist impulse was much less in evidence. If in France and elsewhere in Western Europe, World War II did not generate the same overriding desire for revenge as World War I had done, that was not typically the case in Eastern Europe. There the enemy repression was more brutal and the war often provided the different peoples a welcome opportunity to settle their accounts against one another. Consequently, a readiness for future reconciliation with present enemies was notable for its absence.

Documents from the Polish underground were exceptional in eastern Europe in their advocacy of an international federation on a democratic basis. Yet they still presupposed the summary expulsion of Germans from Polish territory as a precondition for any future reconciliation. While the question of which countries were to form the federation remained undecided, the most open-minded spokesmen for the Polish resistance at least indicated a desire to overcome mutual animosities in a supranational union. With a

⁴⁵ Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 202-10.

⁴⁶ Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order* (New York: Norton, 1974), pp. 326-30.

⁴⁷ Wilfried Loth, "Die europäische Integration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in französischer Perspektive," in *Wirtschaftliche und politische Integration in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Berding (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), pp. 225-46.

⁴⁸ Jacques Maritain, "De la justice politique," in *Europa-Föderationspläne der Widerstandsbewegungen, 1940-45*, ed. Walter Lipgens (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1968), pp. 183-85.

wary eye on the Soviet Union, they saw a particular need for safeguards against centralism disguised as federalism.⁴⁹

East Central European federalist projects, such as there were, originated mainly among the exiles in London rather than in the occupied homelands. The 1942 proposal by Slovak politician Miroslav Hodza, formerly a prime minister of Czechoslovakia, came close to the vision of a collaborative and democratic Central Europe that Naumann had hoped could thrive under German auspices.⁵⁰ For Hodza, however, Central Europe was a Danubian Europe without dominant great power, excluding such potential troublemakers as Germany and Poland, although he wanted to keep the door open to the latter, as well as to Greece.

A design for the union of Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, Hodza's plan surpassed previous East Central European federalist schemes since World War I by being well thought out, unambiguous, and specific. It envisaged a rather tight federation, complete with a common president, chancellor, and parliament, whose inhabitants would retain their national citizenships but would also automatically hold the federal one. Written after Hodza had given up political ambitions of his own following his expulsion from the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, his proposal was remarkably even-handed and free from nationalist rancor. As such, it never found a wider resonance; unlike Naumann's book, it did not even generate a controversy. Ignored rather than debated, its fate augured ill for the future of federalism in eastern Europe once the Nazi "New Order" would be gone.

The Onset of the Cold War: Parting of the Ways

The project initially promoted most actively by the London exiles was that of a Polish-Czechoslovak confederation.⁵¹ Conceived by the Poles as a means of combining forces to resist the expected Soviet ascendancy in the region, it was embraced in 1940 by Czechoslovak President Beneš mainly for another reason: to help bolster his government's still precarious international standing by associating it with the seemingly more secure Polish one. He never contemplated more than a loose association – a customs union with additional cooperation in foreign and trade policies but without common institutions of any substance. Neither partner ever seriously grappled with the two countries' severe disparities in territory, population, economy, and foreign policy priorities.

After the initial declaration of intent, the Poles pressed for more specific understanding. In 1942 a second agreement was signed providing for the establishment of several commissions to deal with various aspects of the proposed union. By that time, however, Beneš's commitment to the project, known to be resented by the now allied Soviet Union, had been superseded by his quest for a special relationship with Moscow, in which any closeness to the London Poles was a liability. As a result, the confederation died of neglect before it was even born. Nor did the less advanced project of the exiled

⁴⁹ Walter Lipgens, ed., *Documents on the History of European Integration*, vol. 1: *Continental Plans for European Union 1939-1945* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), pp. 628-37.

⁵⁰ Milan Hodza, *Federation in Central Europe* (London: Jarrolds, 1942).

⁵¹ Piotr S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940-1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).

Yugoslav and Greek governments for a future union of their homelands fare any better as the communists, ascendant in both countries' resistance movements, propagated their alternative version of federalism.

The federalism of the Yugoslav communists under Tito, who managed to transform the idea into a reality in the Balkans for the first time, was a powerful force. Propelled by their Marxist internationalism, their admiration for the Soviet model, and their nascent imperialism, it was a daring attempt to overcome the region's endemic ethnic fragmentation by sheer revolutionary will. In 1942 Tito's associate Milovan Djilas went so far as to temporarily proclaim a Soviet union republic in the communist-controlled part of his native Montenegro the land whose eighteenth century prince had made a similar gesture by declaring its allegiance to the distant Russian tsar.⁵² In a more practical way, the communists strove to restore Yugoslavia as a truly federal state and possibly add to it further countries as constituent units.

The Yugoslav communists followed the Soviet model by making their federation a cloak for centralistic rule by their party and by arbitrarily drawing the boundaries of six republics, which included two ostensibly autonomous provinces.⁵³ But the scheme differed from the Soviet pattern by not serving to perpetuate the predominance of the largest nationality – the Serbs, thus keeping the door open to possible devolution of power and the eventual transformation of the state into a more authentic, albeit still communist, federation of several centralized units instead of one. Such a system, to be sure, was no prescription for democratic self-government.

The Yugoslav federalism crossed the borderline between the intrastate and the interstate variety once Tito and his associates began to actively indulge their ambition to include Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and perhaps other countries, in a large Balkan union of communist states dominated by Belgrade. Albania was in effect included after its communist party, organized and controlled by Yugoslav emissaries, gained the upper hand in the resistance movement, thus making the country's formal annexation merely a matter of time. The future of Greece, depending upon the ability of the communists to prevail over the royal government supported by the British, was not so clear.

The critical component in the construction of the edifice was Bulgaria – a German ally bound to lose the war and come under Soviet control. In anticipation of this outcome, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian communists had been already since 1943 negotiating about an association of their countries. Although they were unable to agree about whether Bulgaria should join as an equal partner with Yugoslavia as a whole – as preferred by the chief Bulgarian negotiator Trajco Kostov – or be reduced to the status of one of Greater Yugoslavia's constituent republics – as Tito would have liked it – the two parties nevertheless broadly concurred in their views about the desirability of a union. Yet when their emissaries approached Stalin in January 1945 to solicit his blessing, they did not get

⁵² Paul Shoup, "The Yugoslav Revolution: The First of a New Type," in *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*, ed. Thomas T. Hammond and Robert Farrell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 258-59.

⁵³ Branko Petranovic and Momcilo Zecevic, ed., *Jugoslavanski federalizam: Ideje i stvarnost, Tematska zbirka dokumenata* [Yugoslav Federalism: Ideas and Formation, Collection of Documents], 2 vols. (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1987).

it. Instead the cautious Soviet dictator made them to put the project on hold, pending the clarification of the objections raised against it by his British allies.

As the progress of the war opened up the prospect of a vast expansion of Soviet power and influence in Europe, Stalin had his own problems about how, if at all, he should try to reconcile imperialism with federalism. Contrary to the desires of his zealous Yugoslav disciples and the fears of anti-communists everywhere, he ruled out further expansion of the Soviet Union through forced annexation of sovereign states as its constituent units – the method he had applied in 1940 to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, besides the part of Finland he had made into the Karelo-Finnish Soviet republic.

What Stalin did entertain toward the end of the war was the expansion of the formal rights and privileges of the already existing Soviet republics, particularly those that had been afflicted by an upsurge of anti-Soviet nationalism during the German occupation, such as Ukraine and Belorussia. In the end, little change besides was the creation of their make-believe foreign and defense ministries, ostensibly in appreciation of the special burden they had borne in fighting the enemy. The charade helped Stalin's successful bid for the admission of the two republics to full membership in the United Nations as if they were real states.

At the same time, Stalin signaled in no uncertain terms his disapproval of any federalist arrangements west of Soviet borders that might enable the smaller European nations to better stand up to him. This concerned not only the still-born Polish-Czechoslovak confederation but also the British encouragement of a regional association in western Europe, consisting of the Low Countries and possibly France.⁵⁴ In contrast to Churchill's vision of a United States of Europe, the Soviet planners of the postwar order, working in the Moscow foreign ministry under the direction of former foreign commissar Maxim Litvinov and former ambassador to London Ivan Maiskii, envisioned a future Europe of sovereign national or multinational states, overshadowed by the Soviet Union as the only remaining great power on the Continent.⁵⁵

Not only the Soviet Union but also its Western sympathizers opposed international federalism as both unrealistic and undesirable. Rudolf Schlesinger, an Austrian political scientist exiled in Britain and the author in 1945 of the still most useful, if unbalanced, study of East Central Europe's federalist experiences, shared the Soviet view that only national or multinational states would have a place in Europe's international system in the foreseeable future. He argued that any creation of supranational federal entities was wrought with the danger of another war, allegedly because of their tendency to develop into hostile blocs.⁵⁶ He correctly anticipated the Cold War, though not its real causes.

In Western Europe, the trend toward international federalism was an effect rather than the cause of the evolving Cold War, having been largely limited to that area less by Western design than by Eastern default even before the Cold War began. The delimitation reflected the different outlook of the noncommunist resistance movements in the two parts

⁵⁴ Klaus Larres, "A Search for Order: Britain and the Origins of a Western European Union, 1944-55," in *From Reconstruction to Integration: Britain and Europe since 1945*, ed. Brian Brivati and Harriet Jones (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1993), pp. 71-87, at pp. 73-77.

⁵⁵ "Zaniatsia Podgotovkoi Budushchego Mira" [Preparations for a Future World], *Vestnik Arkhiva Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii* 4 (1955): pp. 114-58.

⁵⁶ Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 519-26.

of the continent. Whereas in the West those movements tended to be patriotic and European, in eastern Europe they were more narrowly nationalist and parochial without the same concern for postwar international reconciliation and accommodation. They left the promotion of the region's only important federalist project in the hands of the Balkan communists.

Stalin's reluctance in 1945 to back the Balkan integration project proposed by his Yugoslav disciples was suggestive of his uncertainty about how, if at all, East Central Europe could be organized to suit Soviet interests. As East-West tension mounted, however, he warmed up to the idea. Less inclined to heed Western sensibilities about it, by 1947 he no longer discouraged Tito and his Bulgarian partner, Georgi Dimitrov, from taking further steps toward its realization. At their meeting at Bled in July, they reached a basic understanding about forming a union between their two countries. Although Stalin subsequently intervened to make them delay any further steps until the peace treaty with Bulgaria would come into effect two months later, once it did he took no action to prevent them from making public statements favoring a possible expansion of the prospective federation or confederation by including in it Albania, Romania, even Hungary, and – most importantly – Greece.⁵⁷

By this time, the movement for Western European unity, encouraged not only by Britain but increasingly also by the United States, was gaining momentum. Although nothing as advanced as the Tito-Dimitrov project had yet developed in the West, unlike that project driven by party oligarchs, the support for European integration ran deeper, extended wider, and grew more organically. It had been encouraged by the adoption in July 1947 of the Marshall Plan, which made its Western European recipients work more closely together in pooling their resources, expressing their needs, and sharing the American assistance under the auspices of a transnational authority supervised by the United States. All this helped them to gradually acquire the habits and experiences necessary for a successful building of international structures and institutions on a voluntary basis.⁵⁸

The exclusion of the people under the Soviet domination from the same kind of formative experience marked a critical divergence in the development of the two parts of divided Europe. Although Stalin's intervention was decisive in preventing the participation in the Marshall plan of those countries within his sphere of influence that had been previously interested in it, particularly Czechoslovakia and Poland, even before his intervention their interest had been mainly in receiving the American economic aid rather than taking part in the international collaboration that was to complement it. The Czechoslovak government, though not yet controlled by the communists, had always made it clear that it would accept the plan only if its special relationship with Moscow would not suffer as a result.⁵⁹ In this sense, the Soviet bloc had been in the making even before Stalin acted to formalize it.

⁵⁷ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 34-37.

⁵⁸ David Reynolds, "The European Response: Primacy of Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no.3 (1997): pp. 171-184.

⁵⁹ Vojtech Mastny, "Stalin, Czechoslovakia, and the Marshall Plan: New Documentation from Czechoslovak Archives," *Bohemia* [Munich] 32 (1991): pp. 139-44.

In view of these circumstances, the European federalists, who gathered at three major congresses between mid-August and mid-December 1947, merely recognized the reality when they excluded the pro-Soviet states of east central Europe from their deliberations.⁶⁰ They rightly judged that their own plans would have been undermined, and therefore placed their hopes in the prospective integration of that part of Europe which escaped Soviet domination. For the same reason, Moscow's satellites were not invited to join the meeting at which the Council of Europe was founded in 1949.⁶¹

There was a connection between the progress of Western European unity accelerated by the Marshall Plan and the fate of the Balkan federation. In January 1948, shortly after British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin had made a public plea for advancing Western Europe's not only economic but also political and military integration to counter the progressing sovietization of Eastern Europe, Stalin abruptly reversed himself by forcing his Yugoslav and Bulgarian followers to shelve the unification project he had previously abetted.⁶² At first he toyed with the idea of preserving it as a means of controlling Yugoslavia through Bulgaria, but then he proceeded enforcing the safer option of unifying all his Eastern European dependencies by imposing upon them the Soviet system without any federalist pretenses.

In 1948 George F. Kennan, one of the architects of the Marshall Plan, feared that the creation of a Western military alliance, which was established in the following year in the form of NATO, would prevent "the development of real federal structures in Europe which would aim to embrace all free European countries, and which would be a political force in its own right."⁶³ His concern was misplaced, for the structures continued to develop anyway along different lines, particularly once in 1950 the Schuman Plan for the European Coal and Steel Community set the pattern of economic integration under the authority of new transnational institutions. Their particular federalism subsequently became accepted as part and parcel of the international order by millions of West Europeans.⁶⁴

The Communist Experience: The Legacy of Dictatorship

The Soviet response to the rapid progress of Western economic integration since the Marshall Plan was the establishment, but not actual utilization, of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, or Comecon, in January 1949. As long as Stalin was alive, the organization remained little more than an empty shell while the Soviet Union kept exploiting its eastern European dependencies without any pretense of partnership. Unlike

⁶⁰ Gerda Zellentin, *Die Kommunisten und die Einigung Europas* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1964), pp. 47-49.

⁶¹ Marie-Therèse Bitsch, "Le rôle de la France dans la naissance du Conseil de l'Europe," in *Histoire des débuts de la construction européenne (mars 1948-mai 1950)*, ed. Raymond Poidevin (Brussels, 1968), pp. 165-98.

⁶² Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, pp. 37-39.

⁶³ Draft memorandum by Kennan, September 26, 1948, quoted in Pascaline Winand, "United States-European Relationships, 1957-1963" (paper presented at the conference "Acceleration, Deepening and Enlarging: The European Economic Community, 1957-1963," Oxford, April 21-24, 1996), p. 3.

⁶⁴ Wilfried Loth, "General Introduction," in *Documents on the History of European Integration*, vol. 4: *Transnational Organizations of Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the Struggle for European Union, 1945-1950*, ed. Walter Lipgens and Wilfried Loth, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), pp. 1-7.

the West Europeans, their citizens therefore had good reasons to regard the kind of economic integration they were experiencing as tantamount to plunder.

Stalin mistrusted internal federalism within the part of Europe he controlled as well. In occupied Germany, he opposed the establishment of a federal system of government – ostensibly because of its high cost and low efficiency but in reality because of its being conducive to self-government. Hence the model applied in West Germany was not implemented in East Germany. The only federal experiments in East Central Europe after World War II took place in Czechoslovakia and Tito's Yugoslavia, the latter of which after 1948 remained outside the Soviet bloc. They differed substantially from each other.

At issue in Czechoslovakia was not the establishment of a true federal system but rather its avoidance by appeasing and sidetracking Slovak demands for autonomy. Slovak communists had initially been its ardent advocates but after the still free elections of 1946, which exposed their limited local base of support, they turned into supporters of Prague centralism. After the communist party took power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Slovakia's special status was officially considered neither federal nor autonomous; it was in fact a Soviet-style façade for party centralism. The Bratislava "Board of Commissioners," as the term aptly suggested, functioned not as an autonomous executive but as an agency of the central government for the local implementation of matters of secondary importance, while the separate Bratislava parliament was of the same rubber-stamp variety as the National Assembly in Prague.⁶⁵

The transformation of Czechoslovakia into a nominally federal state after 1968 was the only apparent concession to the reform movement of that year, in which Slovak demands for self-government had played a secondary role and could be subsequently manipulated as a substitute for the country's democratization.⁶⁶ Its Czech and Slovak parts each received separate legislative as well as executive bodies, in addition to which parallel agencies were maintained at the "federal" level of government as well. Yet no similar reorganization took place within the communist party, whose "leading role" in the state was enshrined in its Constitution, thus ensuring continued centralism.⁶⁷ The only significant difference from the previous practice was the increased proportion of Slovaks in the bloated bureaucracy of the intensely unpopular central government, which made future accommodation between the two none too accommodating peoples in a single state more difficult than it would have been otherwise.

Nor was the Yugoslav federalism, though a paragon of power-sharing compared with the Soviet case, a system of good government. Instead, it provided a framework for maneuvering by corrupt party cliques of the different constituent republics in which the communist monopoly of power kept the rest of the population from effectively participating in their self-government.⁶⁸ Worse still, by creating the wrong impression of

⁶⁵ Eduard Táborsky, "Slovakia under Communist Rule: 'Democratic Centralism' versus 'National Autonomy,'" *Journal of Central European Affairs* 14 (1954-55).

⁶⁶ H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 451-89, 870-77.

⁶⁷ Vladimír V. Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter 77: A Study of 'Normalisation' in Czechoslovakia* (Edinburgh: Q Press, 1978), pp. 119-23.

⁶⁸ Denison Rusinow, ed., *Yugoslavia: A Fractured Federalism* (Washington: Wilson Center Press, 1988).

such participation, the system poorly prepared the people for demanding the real thing. Hence, when the moment of truth came, each ethnic group resorted to crude nationalism, asserting its interests against one another and without respect for the other, in the end burying the promise of multi-ethnic federalism amid the orgy of an inter-ethnic war.⁶⁹

In the Soviet Union, the reforms undertaken since Stalin's death did not include attempts at its transformation from a sham into a genuine federation. The May 1953 central committee resolution, adopted at the initiative of the dictator's former security chief Lavrentii P. Beria, envisaged nothing more substantial than increased employment in the ethnic republics of cadres belonging to the titular nationality – a political, rather than constitutional measure which was, in any case, rescinded as soon as its proponent fell from power the following month.⁷⁰ Later on Nikita S. Khrushchev continued the Stalinist practice of arbitrarily tinkering with the status of the different territorial units by administrative means: the downgrading of the Karelo-Finnish Soviet republic to an "autonomous" one and the transfer of the Crimean district from Russia to the Ukraine were cases in point. Under the Brezhnev regime, the potentially troublesome question of the meaning of Soviet federalism was characteristically avoided in official party pronouncements, thus giving rise to a genuine, if inconclusive, debate about the subject among the country's political scholars.⁷¹

Within the Soviet bloc as a whole, the gradual loosening of the Stalinist system since the despot's death manifested itself in the growing reassertion of the diversity of different states amid attempts at their closer integration from above by less brutal means. Symptomatic of the extreme Soviet sensitivity to any signs of attempted integration from below was the near panic that seized the Kremlin in 1968, when it perceived the rapprochement between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia as another Little Entente in the making. Following the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the "Brezhnev doctrine" of a "socialist commonwealth" heralded accelerated efforts to tighten the Soviet empire under the guise of a "socialist commonwealth."

Since the member states of the presumed commonwealth were formally sovereign but in fact beholden to Moscow and consequently subjected to its will, the key question of federalism – that of transferring and sharing sovereignty – did not arise. The formal transfer of sovereignty from the Soviet Union onto the German Democratic Republic as early as 1955, which followed the similar action by the Western Allies in regard to the Federal Republic, merely entailed the termination of most of the responsibilities assumed temporarily by the victorious powers at the end of World War II. The net effect was bringing East Germany's status closer to that of the other Soviet dependencies – a process accomplished in 1961 by sealing the country's last open border through the construction of the Berlin Wall.

The Soviet bloc's two transnational organizations – the Comecon and the Warsaw pact – were created by Moscow as instruments for controlling and managing its allies rather than by all of them jointly as expressions of a common will to define and maintain the terms of their partnership. Like the Comecon in 1949, the Warsaw pact in 1955, too, was

⁶⁹ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 251.

⁷⁰ Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, pp. 179, 186-87.

⁷¹ Grey Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism," *Soviet Studies* 18 (1966-67): 458-81.

originally created in response to the advancing Western integration. A primarily political undertaking mainly intended to support Khrushchev's contemporary diplomatic initiatives aimed at altering the European security environment in Soviet favor, the alliance continued but remained devoid of military substance for several years after those initiatives had failed to bring the desired results.⁷²

Instead Khrushchev from 1956 onward proceeded to revitalize the Comecon as a framework for closer economic cooperation and division of labor under Soviet supervision. Yet although the organization established common transnational institutions, it hardly bore any resemblance to the West's European Economic Community, evolving concurrently after the conclusion in 1957 of the Treaty of Rome. Instead the Comecon was very much what Moscow maintained the EEC supposedly was, namely, an extended arm of the dominant superpower designed to exploit the economy of its allies for its own benefit.

The dynamism of the Soviet trading bloc contrasted sharply with that of the West's Common Market. Within the Comecon, the flow of trade linked its smaller members mainly with the Soviet Union rather than with one another, thus restricting rather than expanding their economic cooperation.⁷³ Hence it was understandable that, once Romania in 1955 successfully asserted its right to decide about its own economic priorities against Moscow's attempt to dictate them, the tendency of the members of the Comecon was to break out of its restrictions.

Given the paucity of additional candidates for membership other than communist states outside of Europe and Moscow's impoverished clients in the Third World, the organization notably failed to develop the kind elaborate procedures for bringing in eager new members that became the hallmark of the EEC. Nor did the similarly elaborate voluntary transfer of decision-making powers from the national governments to Brussels, implemented by its member states ever so carefully over the years, have a parallel in the Soviet-dominated part of the Continent. While in the long run the prevailing desire in the communist part of Europe was for the weakening, in Western Europe it was for the strengthening of the respective supranational institutions.

Because of its ideological blinkers, the Soviet Union proved conceptually incapable to grasp the true nature of the new kind of international federalism that took roots in the West.⁷⁴ Falling back on Lenin's polemic against the United States of Europe – whose creation he had regarded as “either impossible or reactionary” under the capitalist system⁷⁵ – Soviet analysis interpreted the economic integration initiated by the Schuman Plan as an American ploy for the rearmament of West Germany. There was no difference between the interpretation offered to the public and the one the insiders believed among themselves. In the expert opinion commissioned confidentially by the Soviet government from the prestigious economist A. Arutunian in 1951, at issue in the economic integration

⁷² Vojtech Mastny, “The Origins of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Quest for Security,” in *Socio-Economic Dimensions of the Changes in the Slavic-Eurasian World*, ed. Shugo Minagawa and Osamu Ieda (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 1996), pp. 355-84.

⁷³ Michael Kaser, *Comecon: Integration Problems of the Planned Economies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 143-44.

⁷⁴ Vladislav Zubok, “The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev,” *Journal of European Integration History* 2, no. 1 (1996): pp. 85-98.

⁷⁵ Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 21, p. 340.

was "the preparation of a third World War by creating a Western European economic base for the aggressive North Atlantic pact under U.S. hegemony."⁷⁶

Soviet observers could not bring themselves to believe that European integration could take place voluntarily. They saw even its successes as manifestations of contradictions between competing capitalist monopolies, prophesying its ultimate failure. In 1962, Khrushchev for the first time conceded that the "imperialist integration in Western Europe" was there to stay, professing Soviet readiness for "peaceful political competition not only between the states with different political systems but also between their economic alliances."⁷⁷ Yet it took Moscow another ten years to recognize the European Community as a vigorous international organization in its own right rather than a tired creature of American imperialists. And only in the early 1980s, when the Comecon's deficiencies had become too glaring to be ignored, did its members begin to seek formal relations with its thriving Western counterpart; even so, lest they become infected by the contagion, the Soviet Union allowed them do so only as a group rather than individually. By 1989, they came to see the way to the Comecon's salvation in its increased collaboration with and adaptation to the EC; by that time, however, it was already too late.⁷⁸

Nor did the Warsaw pact organization have a potential to become the training school for supranational partnership that NATO developed into during the forty years of the Cold War. Transformed into its military counterpart from a mainly political structure only in the late nineteen-sixties, the communist alliance was in effect an extended arm of the Soviet ministry of defense. It trained the officer corps of its member states at Soviet military academies in unswerving obedience to Moscow, imbuing them with a mental rigidity poorly suited to the growth of democratic, much less federalist attitudes. The Warsaw pact was used by the Kremlin as an instrument of repression and regimentation of its eastern European dependencies; once the will to repress and regiment was lost, it simply melted away, leaving behind warped notions about how the strong and the weak could collaborate to in a common institutional setting.

After the Cold War: Applying Western Models

For want of attractive indigenous alternatives, Western international institutions remained the only credible models available to the peoples of East Central Europe as the communist rule and Soviet empire were approaching their end. Yet those institutions had not been not developed with the intention to be applied in an area whose separation from the West was widely expected to last for the foreseeable future, if not forever. The reveries of anticommunist exiles in the early years of the Cold War about how their

⁷⁶ Quoted in Kira Zueva, "'Plan Shumana' I Sovetskii Soiuz" [The Schuman Plan and the Soviet Union], in *Istoriia evropeiskoi Integratsii, 1945-1994* [The History of European Integration], ed. A. S. Namazova and B. Emerson (Moscow: Institut vseovshchei istorii RAN, 1995), pp. 55-65, at p. 58.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Andrei Grachev, "Soviet Leadership's View of Western European Integration (1950-1960s)" (paper presented at the conference "Acceleration, Deepening and Enlarging: The European Economic Community, 1957-1963," Oxford, March 21-24, 1996), p. 11.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Zuev, "Gorbachevskaia perestroika v otnosheniiakh s ES" [Gorbachev's Perestroika in the Relations with EC], in Namazova and Emerson, *Istoriia evropeiskoi integratsii*, pp. 257-66.

liberated countries could be united after the demise of communism had faded away without noticeable impact.⁷⁹

Prior to the unexpected end of the Cold War, transnational federalist initiatives intended to include in some ways the communist part of Europe were rare and modest. They included particularly the effort of the Hungarian government to forge a special relationship with neighboring Austria on the premise that small nations on each side of the ideological divide because of their geographical location might have a useful role to play in reducing the rigidity of the two power blocs. The one quasi-federalist scheme that was actually put into effect was the Italian-inspired Alpe-Adria project of 1978.

Exploiting for a good purpose the lingering nostalgia for the Habsburg Central Europe, the project brought together some of its former territories in an ingenious attempt to promote collaboration across the ideological boundaries, bypassing the respective national capitals. The collaboration, limited to such relatively uncontentious agenda as culture, tourism, transportation, and environment, gradually involved the Italian regions of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the Austrian Länder of Carinthia, Styria, and Upper Austria, the Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia, two Hungarian provinces, besides other regional entities as members or interested observers. As a low-key undertaking, the scheme survived the end of communism, and briefly blossomed into the Italian-sponsored Pentagonale and Hexagonale after the addition of Czechoslovakia and Poland, before falling victim to the Yugoslav war and the Italian corruption crisis.⁸⁰

When the Soviet empire in east central Europe collapsed, the majority of its inhabitants, regardless of their enthusiasm for the idea of European unity, did not have a clear conception of what this meant. What was clearer in their minds was that the Europe they believed in ended at the former Soviet borders, thus including themselves but not the peoples farther whom they tended to look upon with disdain. While thinking of themselves as belonging to the Western-centered Europe they did not sufficiently grasp the manner of its integration, with its diverse nations' respect for each other, their willingness to part with significant portions of their sovereignty, their acceptance of unfamiliar concepts for the protection of individual and group rights, and the essential requirement of their constant readiness to compromise, all of which had been so conspicuously missing under the communist rule.

The obstacles to federalism in East Central Europe, while aggravated by the forty years of communism, had been rooted in a much longer historical experience of its peoples. There had been little in that experience that would make the idea attractive or even interesting. Federal structures of any kind had been exceptional and federalist thinking at best marginal in the part of Europe whose modern history had been so prominently shaped by a quest for self-assertion within national states. The notion of a citizen owing legitimate allegiance to more than one state entity had been alien there.

Having reached the eastern part of the continent later than the western part, nationalism proved more durable in the former than in the latter; having encountered more resistance in asserting itself, it also assumed more intense forms there. It had been the

⁷⁹ Elizabeth K. Valkenier, "Eastern European Federation: A Study in the Conflicting National Aims and Plans of the Exile Groups," *Journal of Central European Affairs* 14 (1955).

⁸⁰ Sergio Romano, "East Central Europe in Post-World War I Italian Diplomacy, in Mastny, *Italy and East Central Europe*, p. 446.

principal force of the emancipation of its peoples from communist internationalism and Soviet hegemony; even as both began to recede from memory, it still provided the all but exclusive source of their self-identification, which in much of Western Europe had meanwhile been widely complemented and sometimes superseded by identification with Europe as a whole. With few exceptions, the successor states of the three defunct federations – the Soviet, the Yugoslav, and the Czechoslovak – defined themselves as those of their dominant nationalities rather than of all their citizens regardless of description.

In East Central Europe, only Germany, and less importantly, post-1918 Austria could boast a substantive and successful federal tradition. The success of internal federalism in West Germany facilitated its smooth and solid integration into united Europe, making Germans foremost advocates of its further transformation along federal lines. Quite apart from Germany's economic power, the vitality of its both internal and international federalism positioned it as a key intermediary for the formerly communist countries aspiring for admission into integrated Europe. President François Mitterrand's attempt to claim this role for France by initiating in 1991 his stillborn European confederation project – itself a successor of a similar non-starter launched by Paris in 1930⁸¹ – only proved that his country was not up to the task.

A decade since the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the prospects for the growth of federalism in postcommunist Europe remained uncertain. The promise of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, generally judged to have tried to accomplish too much too soon, was unlikely to be fulfilled in the near future, despite progress toward closer integration in such important matters as common European currency. Yet that progress continued to follow the established pattern of mainly economic cooperation while integration in foreign policy, security matters, and social legislation was lagging behind because of the prevailing unwillingness to part with sovereignty in areas in which, rightly or wrongly, national approaches have been traditionally regarded more appropriate.⁸²

Such a development did not augur well for the applicability of the federative model in the prospective integration of additional members from the formerly communist part of the Continent. The association agreements which the European Union concluded with them in preparation for their eventual membership were understandably and justifiably modest, aimed at helping them to gradually acquire over a period of time the habits and patterns of cooperation already established among the existing members rather than trying to advance beyond.

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As the twentieth century is coming to a close the European Union remains despite its shortcomings the unrivaled beacon for the future organization of the Continent. Yet its prospective "widening" is not any more likely to move it substantially closer to a federation than is its "deepening." The peoples of East Central Europe have not been adequately conditioned by their history to embrace readily the habits and attitudes of

⁸¹ Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 446.

⁸² Michael Welsh, *Europe United? The European Union and the Retreat from Federalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

international federalism. In their preparing for life in a cooperative rather than confrontational Europe, at issue is more the overcoming than the fulfillment of their historical legacy. It took the West Europeans forty years and the perceived Soviet threat to make the European Union what it has become; now the time is shorter and the challenge of a threat is here no more. But there is instead the example of Western Europe to provide the necessary inspiration and incentive..