

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 51, No.1 - Spring 2005

Editor of this issue: Stasys Goštautas

ISSN 0024-5089

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LITUANUS

www.lituanus.org

LITHUANIA AS PARADIGM: A CENTRAL EUROPEAN DESTINY

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For the last fifty years, "Central Europe" as a concept has been a clarion call to the democratic half of the European continent to resist regarding all Communist-run countries as a single entity. A protest, in other words, against the postwar East-West split along the lines of Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, Slavic and non-Slavic worlds. In fact, implied in the very term was a criticism of the West for having betrayed the West. Regardless of the literary efforts of such luminaries as Milan Kundera, György Konrád and Czesław Miłosz, the criticism went unheard, unheeded, and, in fact, turned into a farce.

Westerners assumed that it was a simple case of resentment: the East resented being identified as such; and so, with characteristic political sensitivity by way of the mass media and stereotypical reasoning (or nonreasoning), the term "Eastern" was gradually converted to the euphemistic "Central." In the interest of clarification (actually, obfuscation), the two terms eventually became interchangeable: the countries in question (fortunately, by now post-Communist) were generally identified as Central Eastern Europe. As someone who has frequent encounters with the French language, I can attest to the fact that the concept of "Central Europe" is not infrequently used as Russian *epitheton explicans*. What's more, even the concept of a "Central Europe" is being resisted; more than once we have been accused of simply mourning the loss of monarchy and empire, when, in fact, we are presumably no more than a conglomerate of tribes, unified - today, no less than 75 or 150 years ago - only in our desire to reach Paris.¹

Therefore, even though the plea of "Central Europe" has gone unheeded, we can't speak of a misunderstanding. Since Central Europe is in fact within the perimeters of Europe, the criticism of the criticized coincides with that of the critic. Anyone insisting on his Central European identity is obviously admitting to the need for proving his European one. Everyone by now is familiar with the geographic sleight-of-hand that by means of geographical coordinates locates the center of the European continent in Lithuania or the Ukraine - but which turns out to be no impediment at all to those living in Prague, Cracow, Budapest or Vienna, who, in turn, use their own historical and cultural arguments to manipulate geography in order to locate themselves in the center of Europe as well. Incredibly, even the French have felt compelled in these inflationary times of geographic centering to place their own geographic marker somewhere in the *Massif Central* district, near a hamlet with a long name that includes the word for "rooster".

This would be more remarkable only if it weren't a testimony to the fact that France obviously no longer feels itself to be the social center of Europe. What the French marker admits to in stating that "Here lies the center of Europe" is the disquieting sense that there is some other relevant center existing elsewhere.

This center marking is clearly a European symptom. Where is this imagined and relevant center that's provoked so much effort at usurpation? Is it Paris? But isn't Paris, no less than, say, Vienna, merely another attempt to remember bygone glories? A point found in parliamentary democracy, in a market economy, in general flourishing? But wouldn't North America, Japan, Israel or New Zealand be better candidates? Where then should we place Switzerland - a police state *par excellence*? Does it even belong within the social structure of Europe? In what should Switzerland take pride? Prolonging the agony of Mikhail Gorbachev or preserving Saddam Hussein? Or perhaps for shameful capitulation to Slobodan Milosevic? Earning it the right to a flag with gold stars against a blue background? A right shared with non-democratic Balkan Greece, pious Ireland, and Mafiosi Italy?

If one speaks in terms of individuals, Europe would not seem to belong to anyone who isn't a French wine and food gourmet; who isn't conversant with Renaissance art, German Romanticism and the English novel; or with dissonant music, or perhaps without any of it. In this case, there are no Europeans in the world with the exception of Curzio Malaparte.

Here's the western Eurasian view of political reality: the social structure of so-called Western Europe - as evidenced by its geopolitical heterogeneity - is an artificial construct, ad hoc in the extreme and no longer reflective of its reality, for which this society was completely unprepared. It would be fascinating to watch the Western European effort at restoring the old order were it not for the fact that such effort would bring enormous suffering to a great many people. It would be equally interesting to watch the games being played with the word "Europe," with its redundant modifier "Western," though any other modifier could not possibly be describing Europe. It would be interesting, if it weren't so thoroughly ideological.

Central Europeans ground their European identity in their own historical consciousness. But what is this historical consciousness? It becomes the goal of history to identify a series of events in a meaningful way. Traditionally, historical events are defined through fate or destiny. Those living within the periphery of similar interests are considered partners and can experience Europe as destiny, to be understood only by another Central European. In the interest of illustration, let me modify just slightly the title of my essay: "LITHUANIA AS PARADIGM - A EUROPEAN DESTINY."

1. Tribes. Europe came into being during the Middle Ages, prior to which it was a region of tribes. It was during the Middle Ages that the latter became *nations*, but only in the event that they had created a state. The Lithuanians were the last tribe to have created a European state, in a "green pasture," as it were, or more accurately - in a "green forest." By the same token, the formation of the Lithuanian state during the first third of the thirteenth century marks the end of the Middle Ages, the period during which the foundations were laid. Only afterwards - at various points of the continent at various times - do cultural epochs emerge: Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque.

Lithuanians belong to the Baltic tribes and, like Germans and Slavs, are first and foremost a linguistic conscription. The linguistic analysis of names associated with bodies of water testifies to the fact that at some point Baltic peoples lived (or, at the very least, named waterways for the Slavic peoples) in the regions between the Vistula River and Moscow, between the Daugava and Dnieper. There were numerous Baltic peoples; the Lithuanians, however, were the only ones to have created a state. The Latvians succeeded only in maintaining their existence; the Prussians failed at it, and with their passing all that remained was the name of a geographic region. Among the western Slavic peoples, one can, similarly, talk of the Czechs, the Sorbs and the Slavs of the river Elbe-Venedians, who have continued to be ruled, given his official title, by the Danish king.²

2. State. Lithuanian self-unification within a state originated as a defense against the German Teutonic Order, which at the start of the thirteenth century, under the pretext of spreading Christianity, overran the Baltic coast. The Lithuanians succeeded in preserving, not only their lives and territory, but even their access to the sea. Their state (an organized system of military might and fortified strongholds) spread south and east throughout the lands that remain after the breakup of Kiev, which is swept by Mongol attacks. During the fourteenth century, the Lithuanians conquer the entire Dnieper basin (the region that encompasses the White Russia of today and the larger part of the Ukraine) and create a vast state that extends all the way to the Black Sea. The Lithuanians constitute a minority, mainly a ruling class, with the Slavs making up the majority, and the ones to resist the Mongol and Tartar invasions. Thus the Lithuanians duplicate the experience of the Scandinavian Vikings, who in the ninth and tenth centuries formed Kiev Rus with Slavic peoples, the role of Kiev now being played by Vilnius.³ The subjugated Slavs retain their own culture, while the Lithuanians voluntarily adopt Slavic customs and language (the oldest juridical codes [*Statutas*] being written in old Church Slavic) and marry the daughters of the local nobility. The pagan Lithuanians permit the Slavs to practice Orthodox Christianity; some even convert to the local Christian religion, even though earlier experiences with the Christ-bearing Crusaders could not have left pleasant memories. There was no state religion; state institutions used the language of the majority - a fact which the Ukrainian writer Gogol would remember later, with historical nostalgia, after the territories of this vast state had long since been conquered by the Muscovites. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the Lithuanians sought to unify all the lands of Rus - a legacy of the Riurik dynasty; however, the battle for survival against the German Teutonic Order would force the Lithuanians to orient themselves towards Poland.⁴

3. European Politics. In 1386, Jogaila, the founder of the Jagiellonian dynasty, ascends the Polish throne. Lithuania is ruled by his cousin Vytautas - the victor at Žalgiris. The battle against the Teutonic Order is being fought in the arena of ideas as well. In 1415, prior to the Ecumenical Council in Constance, Janas, the Czech rector at the University of Prague and Paulius, the rector at the University of Cracow, oppose Church rulings in proclaiming that pagans have a right to life, that baptism by coercion is un-Christian and that the emperor has no right to bestow pagan territory on crusaders.

Lithuania-Poland, which as yet had no joint ruler, was ruled by monarchs descended from the same Lithuanian Jagiellonian dynasty. This dynasty was second in power only to the Habsburgs in Europe, and the royal line of Vilnius-Cracow became significant in the European political axis. In the fifteenth century, this dynasty would branch off towards the Hungarian city of Buda and the Czech city of Prague. The Lithuanian rulers would defend Europe from the Turks on two fronts: Vladislav II, seated on the Hungarian throne, does battle in the Carpathian region as well as in Serbia and Bulgaria (where he perishes near Varna in 1444), while Casimir IV and his son John Albrecht, seated on the thrones of Vilnius and

Cracow, respectively, march against the Turks in the Carpathians and terrorize Bukovina and Moldavia. The Czech and Hungarian branch of the dynasty breaks off with the death of Ludwig II in 1526 in a battle with the Turks at Mohács.

The Turkish victory proved disastrous to the Gediminas dynasty in another sense as well. Lithuania and Hungary (through the mediation of Poland and the Czechs) were vital as trade routes from the North to the Byzantine empire. The fall of Cargrad (Constantinople) left Lithuania and Hungary no one to trade with; the transit states had lost their function.⁵

4. Internal Relations. After 1526, the descendants of Jogaila rule over only the states of Poland and Lithuania. In 1569, the Union of Lublin unifies the two, not only with a joint ruler, but also a joint parliament (Ukraine reverts to the Crown, and the Grand Duchy shrinks to about the size of the current republics of Lithuania and White Russia combined). The northern regions (Prussia and Livonia) succeed in neutralizing Luther's Reformation, which has come via the Teutonic Order, to become secular duchies and vassals of either Poland or Lithuania. (In 1525, Prussia is secularized by the Grand Master of the Order Albrecht Hohenzollern, nephew of the Lithuanian-Polish ruler Sigismund II.) A mortal enemy, however, lurks in the east - Moscow's Russia.

The two states differ in everything imaginable. The Lithuanian-Polish *Respublika* is a parliamentary democracy (composed of the nobility) with independent courts, a guarantee of personal liberties, and a king with more or less the status power of an elected president. In Moscow's Russia, the autocratic tsar rules with the assistance of the *oprichniki* (police) element.

With the dissolution of the Gediminas-Jogaila dynasty, the throne of the *Respublika* passes to representatives of the French, Hungarian and Swedish monarchies, while Moscow's Russia retains its own dynasty. Ruled by Catholic kings, the aristocratic *Respublika* guarantees freedom of worship to all non-Catholics (Lutherans, Calvinists, Czech Brethren and Orthodox believers) and tolerates even the anti-Trinitarians. Nor does Lithuania merely duplicate the freedoms granted in Poland: freedom of worship, granted by the Lithuanian parliament, actually predates Poland's; in fact, Lithuania's bishops ratified the agreement, which Poland's bishops fail to do.⁶ By contrast, the tsar, once he subsumed the Orthodox church for his own purposes, was intolerant of all other religions. The Moslem Tartars settle in Lithuanian territories, as do the transplanted Karaites - a Turkish-speaking people who profess a pre-Talmudic Judaism (in fact, the only nation, apart from the Falashas of Ethiopia, that profess Judaism without being a Jewish people); Jews also settle in large numbers throughout her territories.⁷ Moskovia is *judenrein*. Official documents in the *Respublika* are written in Polish, White Russian and Latin (but not in Lithuanian); Moskovia permits only one church and state language.⁸ In 1539, the Polish-Lithuanian ruler declares freedom of the press; and a 1543 decree grants permission to study in foreign universities. In 1581, the tsar grants the "right" of resettlement within certain territorial limits, though somewhat earlier, in fact, Moscow's first printer, I. Fiodorov, flees to Vilnius after his press was destroyed by an irate "Moscow populace." *Respublika* welcomes and enthusiastically supports and cultivates Latin humanism and Greek language studies; the greatest crime in Moskovia is any suggestion of closer ties between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches: Moscow's contempt for Latin culture is so intense that it regards the Roman cross as a sign of the devil and - in spite of the fact that it proclaims itself as legal heir to the Byzantine tradition - it shows no interest in the Greek language. (Greek studies, along with burgeoning literary activity, will appear only after Moscow occupies Kiev in the mid-seventeenth century.) A cultural renaissance begins within the Cracow-Vilnius-Kiev triangle; the centralized government of Moscow destroys any sort of independence retained by the cities.⁹

5. National Identity. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian *Respublika* disintegrated due to a parliamentocracy that totally paralyzed the effective functioning of the state and because of the tyrannical behaviour of the nobility towards its vassals (especially of the Polish nobility in Ukraine). Experiments in enlightened reform came too late. A Muscovite darkness in Lithuania lasted until the First World War. It's in this darkness that the first national renaissance began.

A parliament of the aristocratic elite did not confer any political rights on the bourgeoisie, with unfortunate results. The national identity of the nobility grew out of its sense of the state (Adam Mickiewicz: "*Litzwo! Ojczyzna moja!*" / *Lithuania! My homeland!*), rather than language.¹⁰ On the flip side, the burgher and landowning classes, who spoke in the vernacular Lithuanian, lacked a sense of state. After several brutally suppressed uprisings of the nobility, a national renaissance takes hold, cultivated by an intelligentsia composed of members of the Catholic clergy and various professions. During the second half of the nineteenth century a barely perceptible, but nevertheless effective, social revolution occurs: the landowning gentry and the bourgeoisie acquire a civic sense - and that despite suppression by the absolutist Muscovites.¹¹

The first national resurgence formed along the lines of the national language. In the territories of historical Lithuania this principle helped maintain a historical continuity. But it also split the region apart: Poland claims everything written in the Polish language and incessantly assumes the role of *Kulturträger* for the region. Lithuania has to begin from ground zero: the linguistic principle hinders her from inheriting the so-called *Lituaniae doctae* legacy; she rejects the Baroque, the Age of Enlightenment, and Romanticism. (If one were to ignore the Ukrainian School of Romanticism, the Lithuanian Mickiewicz/Mickevičius and the born-in-Volhynia, bred-in-Poland Juliusz Slowacki, the only one of the acclaimed "purely" Polish Romantic poets writing in Polish, the only one to remain would be Zygmunt Krasinski).¹²

The most impoverished become the Belorussians, who hopelessly seek support in this cultural vacuum.¹³ The Jews remain marginalized, even though in Poland, as well as in Lithuania, they had not constituted an insignificant national minority, but a genuine - though separate - nation, with its own language and culture.¹⁴ (Because of its intense spiritual life Vilnius came to be known as the Jerusalem of the North. Many Ashkenazi Jews still call themselves Litvaks.)

6. The Moral Problem. Lithuania's declaration of independence on February 16, 1918 was tantamount to a declaration of war¹⁵: war with the Russians, war with the Germans, war with the Poles, who were supported politically and militarily by the French (France maintained a military base in Klaipeda for a long time, hoping that this region would be transferred to Poland, once Poland's "unification" with Lithuania took place.) The Lithuanians made no attempt to restore Greater Lithuania or incorporate Belorussia, as defined by the Bolsheviks in 1919. Unfortunately, the already small republic shrank even further: in 1920 Pilsudski occupied its capital, Vilnius; in 1939, Hitler seized its only harbor, Klaipėda;¹⁶ in 1940, Stalin swallowed the entire country.

During their twenty years of independence, the Lithuanians succeeded in creating a thriving state with a stable currency, functional infrastructure, and educational system; modernized agriculture; and created a food processing industry for export.¹⁷ The forties witness a major catastrophe. Lithuania experiences a series of occupations, first by Russia, then Germany, and then again Russia (the Russians restore Vilnius, which had been occupied by Poland, to Lithuania). A calculated destruction ensues. The Germans kill 97 percent of the Lithuanian Jews (225,000 people) and deport Lithuanian youth for forced labor throughout the Reich. The Russians deport 40,000 families to Siberia (counting only the deportations of 1941), massacre tens of thousands in Lithuania and imprison tens of thousands more. Whoever can, emigrates abroad. With a population of three million in 1940, Lithuania loses one million people between the years of 1940-1952; half of these murdered by the Russians, a quarter by the Germans, the rest lost to emigration. The Lithuanians resist. They refuse to support Germany (as a result, Lithuanian divisions of the SS are never formed, as they were in Latvia and Estonia), and when the "liberating" Red Army approaches in 1944, the partisan uprising begins, to last until 1952. The last holdouts of the Partisan Army are arrested in 1956. 100,000 Lithuanians participated in the armed resistance against the Russian occupation. Compared to Latvia and Estonia, where there was resistance as well, "Soviet man" found Lithuania a much more hazardous place, with the result that Lithuania succeeded in preserving its national inheritance within its own geographical space.

The democratic world suffers from a severe case of fatigue and has lost interest in the Baltic countries: it announces the fact that its land degradation and human destruction is an internal matter of the sovereign Soviet Union.¹⁸ One by one, the embassies of the once independent state of Lithuania are shut down (the only ones to remain open are in the Vatican and in the English-speaking world). France sells its Lithuanian embassy building, never the property of the French to begin with, to the Soviets; Britain sells Lithuania's gold reserves, which Lithuania had placed in the Bank of England for safe-keeping.

During the eighties and nineties, a time of endemic ("marasmic") détente worldwide, Lithuania experiences its second national resurgence. After a legal election and in accordance with the Soviet constitution, Lithuania regains its independence on March 11, 1990. The democracies of Western Europe, enamored of the wholly undemocratic Gorbachev, do not attempt to hide their displeasure at this hindrance of perestroika, and refuse to recognize the new realities: "We Europeans are united, whereas you want to do what - disperse?" The president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, expresses his support of Lithuania's declaration of independence, but Czechoslovakia does not lift a finger.¹⁹ Mitterrand and Kohl request Landsbergis to withdraw the declaration. The UN argues against inclusion of Lithuania in view of its already having included the USSR, even though two of its members are Belorussia and Ukraine. Gorbachev's efforts at terror and intimidation of Lithuania are supported by Italy (Giannide Micheli: *There are limits which no nation has a right to ignore*); France engages in belittlement (Roland Dumas: *What do you Baits want; you've only existed for twenty years*); Spain is happy but worried (*Let's hope that Catalonia won't follow Lithuania's example!*); the United States remains silent; while Germany pays out new billions to the Soviets (unification has got to be worth something!).*

The democratic world officially recognizes Lithuania only after Gorbachev falls from power and Yeltsin recognizes her as an independent state. However, that's as far as it goes (*scilicet* to the democratic world). Western markets remain closed to her. The attention of European society turns towards the mysterious Russia; the "Central European" democracies, their attention riveted on Brussels, would gladly refuse to have anything to do with the "*ignoramus* of the East." With the Red Army remaining in Lithuania, the nation is left vulnerable to Russian blackmail. The example of Bosnia and Herzegovina presages the fact that Lithuania, whatever happens, will be left to her fate.

7. Fate of Europe. Europe is a system comprised of a certain set of moral values. The last century has witnessed a movement away from such values. The most advanced countries of Western Europe have lost sight of the original system. It is, therefore, at the periphery of the system, far removed from the self-absorbed European community, far removed from its 12 percent European beer that the high cost of these values continues to be recognized. There are countries on this periphery that have understood the cost with their lives. It is there that we can find Europe's *relevant center*.

Prague, April 1993

1. In the interest of accuracy, I have to point out that the Central Europe of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire was a more welcome place than the one created by Bismarck's or Hitler's Germany. What's more, not only the Poles and Ukrainians fought for a place under the Parisian sun, but the Portuguese, Roumanians, Argentinians, and Americans as well.
2. Speaking of periods of national revival/resurgence, which Lithuanians experienced twice, the Prussians and their ties to the Baits come to mind. Less attention is usually given to the neighboring Latvians. Similarly, the literature of the Prague Spring reveals greater interest in its tribes, which were destroyed by the Saxon Marquis Geras, than in the peasants of Budysin.
3. Initially, the term "Rusi" defined bands of Viking warriors, in other words, the territories under "Russian" rule; however, once the Viking warriors had merged with the local populations, it defined their duchies. "Rusia," "Rossija," "Vseja Rusj" [all Russias] all apply to this "Russian entity." Initially, Kiev was its center. With its destruction in the twelfth century, the Kievan Rus' had become an European state much like the earlier Great Moravia. In the sixteenth century, which regarded itself as the only legitimate heir to both Kiev and Byzantium, sees the emergence of a state in western Eurasia that never really succeeds in identifying itself with *Europe*.
4. The fact that ethnically sparse countries create a state in a conquered territory that is more populous ethnically and culturally more advanced than theirs is not exceptional in medieval Europe: take the examples of England, Ireland, Gallia, Italy. Nor is the merger of linguistically similar tribes into a political entity ruled by a single dynasty an idea foreign to Europe. Consider the German Holy Roman Empire with respect to other western Germanic peoples. Or the competition between the Danes and Swedes for primacy in the Germanic north. Or the ambitions of unification pursued by the Piast and Przemysl heirs during the eleventh century. Long after the Middle Ages, these ideas have disappeared, but are still current in Russia and Germany. It is questionable if this is good for Europe.
5. Another example of a universal phenomenon: fifteenth century Europe reorients itself away from the shores of the eastern Mediterranean toward its western coast and the Atlantic. Venice declines - to the advantage of Genoa; and Italy disappears in Spain's and Portugal's shadow.
6. In that, the *Respublika* differs from the rest of sixteenth century Europe, which witnessed an immoral ruling of the Church at the Peace of Augsburg: *cuius regio eius religio*. Religious dissidents were, at best, allowed to leave the country. As a result of the treaties at Basel, tolerance survives in the lands governed by the Czech Crown, particularly in Moravia.
7. There was only one historical period in Europe when the Christian, Islamic and Jewish cultures lived in mutual harmony and enrichment - that was in Moorish Spain, which was destroyed in the fifteenth century. Lithuania is another European example of sustained cultural harmony, though the cultures thrived on parallel planes without mutual interaction.
8. Pranciškus Skorina, citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, publishes his translation of the Bible into Old Belorussian earlier than Luther does into German: The first half in 1517 in Prague; the second in 1525 in Vilnius. {Luther's translation of the New Testament appears in 1522; the Old Testament in 1534}. The first Polish translation of the Bible appears in 1561. In Volhynia, part of the *Respublika*, the first translation into Church Slavic appears in 1586. Having been invited in 1516 by the tsar to translate the Biblical commentaries, the Greek monk Maksim is imprisoned as he works on the proofs of the philological liturgical texts.
9. Note the destruction of Kievan Rus, the only connection to the Novgorod Republic. In 1488, Moscovia forcibly removed some 7,000 inhabitants and resettled others in their place.
10. In the political sense, even non-Lithuanian nobility regarded itself as Lithuanian; a similar situation can be found in Czechoslovakia after Beta Hora lost in the initial counter-reformation struggle. The second generation of newcomers would become ardent Czechs (bohmisch) patriots. There was also the motto of the Polish-speaking Lithuanian nobility; "I am Lithuanian; I don't speak Lithuanian, but I shall die a Lithuanian." Let's remember Ireland, where even the restoration of political independence (1921) did not safeguard the Celtic language from inevitably disappearing. Thus the Irish describe their relationship with their language: "My language is Irish; I wish I could speak it."
11. In this respect, the so-called Lithuania Minor played an invaluable role. A citizenry appeared in its Protestant-dominated cities that gave rise to a clergy that delivered sermons in Lithuanian; books began to be published in the mid-sixteenth century; the first major works of poetry (K. Donelaitis) appeared in the eighteenth century; finally, books published in the forbidden Latin alphabet were smuggled into Greater Lithuania in the nineteenth century [...] The statistics testify to the scope of such "ideological diversity"; in 1897 fewer than 7 percent of the children attended Russian schools (the only schools existing!), yet 55 percent could read and write!
12. Lithuania's cultural space *vis á vis* Germany. The Austrians make a distinction between what their small republic has created, what the great Habsburg empire had created, and what is otherwise German. Even though the Federal Republic of Germany declared, after its unification with the GDR that it has no plans to expand its territory, yet it has unflinchingly engaged in a kind of cultural Anschluss with respect to everything that is Germanic in Austria {both in the republic and former empire}. Federal Germany claims Egon Schiele and Oscar Kokoschka, Haydn and Bruckner as its own. Leave it to Federal Germany rather than Austria to publish *Geschichte der modernen deutschen Literatur von Hugo von Hofmannstahl bis zu Thomas Bernhard*, namely, the history of German literature (and not just literature written in German) that spans the whole literary spectrum from one Austrian to another. Let that be an incentive to us, Czechs, to begin thinking of our history and culture as a joint venture composed of Czech, German, Austrian, and Jewish contributions, and appealing to our patriotism in the large "Bohemian" sense. František Palacký wrote not a history of "Czechia and Moravia," but rather a "history of the Czech nation in Czechia and Moravia."
13. If we were to compare Belorussia with Slovakia, which is currently laying claim to Greater Moravia in order to buttress itself against something or someone other than Josef Tiso, then the Lithuanians are to the Belorussians what the Czechs are to the Slovaks (creating a joint state and leaving it to its fate). The Poles would find support from the German and Austrian forces (in the sense of cultural sophistication, involvement in the politics of the continent). In place of Moscovia, Hungary would stand up, (a cruel assimilation, the negation of cultural similarities, and disagreement over political liberties). Slovakia differs from Belorussia only in the sequence and duration or lack of its phases. Both nations, both states are concerned about the fact that no one takes them seriously.
14. The clash between Hasidism and Talmudism occurred within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; it was similar in scope to the clash between Jansenism and Catholicism in France, and Pietism and Protestantism in Germany.
15. Under no circumstances can one claim that Lithuania is an artificially created state. The independence of Lithuania was declared by the Lithuanians themselves in a struggle for their national existence. An independent Ireland came into being after World War I under identical circumstances. The case is different for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which arose through diplomatic lobbying. Belgium as well was created artificially in 1830 as a result of a joint agreement between the "superpowers."
16. Klaipėda was occupied just a week after the creation of the Böhmen and Mähren Protectorate; which was to Lithuania as Munich to Czechoslovakia. England and France, the guarantors of the incorporation of Klaipėda into Lithuania left Hitler free to act; the day following the occupation, they signed a treaty to protect Holland and Switzerland from Hitler. In other words, the democratic states of Europe felt a responsibility to protect the weaker ones; eventually, however, Europe's smallest countries came under threat. A reluctance to concern oneself with European problems, the likes of the ones facing Lithuania, was evident in a comment made by a British diplomat: "Vilnius is the capita] of Lithuania; located in Poland; inhabited by Jews."
17. What Lithuania might have achieved can be seen in the example of Finland. The latter also shook off Russian domination after World War I and began from scratch. In terms of the Lithuanian-Polish conflict, one can take lessons from Finland as to how to handle a common past.
18. Since the sixties, the democratic nations have demonstrated a similar lack of attention, even indifference, with regard to Tibet, which is being systematically annihilated by Communist China; by contrast, the condemnation of Israel or South Africa, where the situation is quite different, is severe.
19. Well over a year after its declaration of independence, Lithuania is officially recognized by Iceland. Though late in coming, the fact that the first to acknowledge this manifestation of an essential European value - respect for self-determination - is on the periphery of Europe is particularly noteworthy.

* By August 31, 1993, the Russian army had been completely withdrawn from Lithuania. This article was written several months prior. *Ed.*