

Emil Niederhauser

Enlightenment and the National Movement in East Europe

Enlightenment is usually associated with the 18th century although its first signs became manifest at the end of the preceding century. It was a spiritual trend, in the place of an ideology, the influence of which still can be felt – or it would be good if it continued to be felt – today in certain respects. As Kant put it, in reality, it represented the courage of the individual to get to know everything about himself and the world in the light of the intellect. This was a very significant feature – rational thinking– it produced and that still exerts, or could exert, an influence in the present days.

From a conceptual point of view, many other phenomena belonged to the Enlightenment of that era, as the contemporaries perceived it. Naturally, at most 5% of the people actually thought about such issues. They, however, included not only writers, intellectuals and journalists but also personalities of the government and, on several occasions, even the person highest in rank, the sovereign.

One of the slogans of Enlightenment was “Person”, with capital P, meaning the person in general without any special ethnic attribute. (The great animators of Enlightenment did not think much of these features if they let them pass into their range of vision at all.) That is, Person, without any particular interpretation. More exactly: this was how the 5% in concern perceived this. And they did not notice that their abstract Person was – the white man. The Far East and the Chinese, the “good savages” – good because civilisation had not spoiled them – were very popular in that age. However, no matter how we look at this, the Chinese and the good savages had no place in the society, which this 5% was reflecting on.

A further feature of Enlightenment is the extraordinary optimism of its representatives. Although the great discoveries of natural sciences had come about in the previous century, their news reached this 5% in this era and they fully admired these discoveries. It seemed already back then that people had gotten to know everything about nature, which could be subdued in any way they pleased. (Well, how far the light of Enlightenment shone: we still suffer from the realisation of the great nature transforming plans of the 20th century.) This optimism also nurtured the belief that it was enough to explain to everybody what was rational and then everybody would understand and accept that and would act according to that all his life. That way, people would reach, by way of reason, the society of reason (or rather, Reason), in which no problems would exist. (Older readers might remember how much one had to believe in a society without problems even though – admittedly – we have not yet reached it. However, its glorious coming, so to say, is a question of time and effort only.)

Today, all this might seem to the modern observer – if he takes notice of Enlightenment at all – as some homogeneous trend. Who has ever been

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occupied with the issue to some extent knows it well that this is not the case. The most contradictory thoughts get along well within Enlightenment (naturally, their representatives all the less). However, apart from many other things, certain “national” differences can also be observed. The English established the foundations as a matter of fact; philosophers and economists, even Voltaire himself learned from them during his sojourn in England. However, what inundated the Europe of this 5% was, first and foremost, the system of thought of French Enlightenment. (Sure, the greatest contradictions can be found exactly in this.) All in all, this French Enlightenment, object of the enthusiasm of the 5%, seems to have taken a rather radical form in many of its representatives, even from our perspective today, since Rousseau and Voltaire made an impression on a greater number of persons within the 5% than Montesquieu.

Besides the French, there existed a much more moderate and strongly protestant spirited German Enlightenment. It also looked up to the French variety; nevertheless, this did not hinder it in reducing the overflowing radicalism. German Enlightenment, in conformity with the well-known thoroughness of Germans, tried to “make money” from the victory of reason and the enthusiastic ministers spoke about the advantages of stables in animal husbandry on the occasion of the Christmas sermon. Naturally, there were radical thinkers among the Germans as well, only that their works did not reach the audience in those times.

Besides the radical French and the moderate German Enlightenment, we can mention a certain kind of Italian Enlightenment as well. From among its representatives, the historian Muratori and the jurist Beccaria are remembered most often. Italian Enlightenment had some elements related to Catholicism. The Italian variety is not relevant in the relation to be discussed here, since, as opposed the first two, it had no effect on Eastern Europe. True, Catherine the Great made extensive use exactly of Beccaria during her legislation preparatory works. However, this was of her personal concern. The number of the enthusiasts of Italian Enlightenment did not reach that certain 5% in its “native land” either.

Before raising the actual question, that is, how Enlightenment, which focuses on the Person, can turn into a national movement, let us take a look at the old Eastern Europe of the 18th century in order to find out: in what frameworks did the ethnicities live here prior to their transformation into nations that took place only a few decades later.

The peoples living in the area were situated within the borders of three great empires: the Habsburg, the Russian and the Ottoman empires. Actually, there was a fourth one as well, the Polish-Lithuanian state but it was divided first in part and then completely exactly during the half a century in concern. For this reason, we will have to come back to this change and the Polish for a few remarks.

All three empires – as well as the Polish-Lithuanian state – were rather variegated with respect to ethnicity, with many ethnic groups living in them. In addition to this, they lived not beside each other but in a way that these groups mingled within the territories. The city-dweller belonged to a different ethnicity

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than the peasant of the surroundings and even the landlord, if there was one (there was not everywhere!), belonged to still another kind of ethnicity.

This, however, is still a second- or third-rate difference because then and there, in the traditional society, ethnic differences did not play a fundamental role. Social differences were considered much more fundamental, that is, whether one belonged among the landlords – among aristocrats and noblemen – or among the peasants, made up mostly by peasant tenants (not every peasant was a peasant tenant!) or among the freemen of the cities. And there were intellectuals as well, forgotten by many for the most part: usually, the priests belonged among them together with the state officials. Sometimes, other representatives of the professions associated with the modern intellectual also appear but, naturally, as individual exceptions.

Social differences imply a different kind of separation than ethnic differences. These could be examined individually, without any reference to each other. However, this would not help us in getting closer to the particular situation of the ethnic groups of the region. The two features, the two aspects are to be compared and examined together in the case of the given ethnicities. At this point, it turns out that through generalisation, without considering several important details, that is, in a way through the falsification of the actual situation, we can divide these ethnic groups into two major groups. Those with a complete social structure – with nobility, peasants, burghers and intellectuals – belong in one and those without such a complete structure belong in the other. One essential difference emerges here: whether the given ethnic group has its own elite of feudal character, a nobility, or not. Naturally, one can find other ethnic groups that are “incomplete” in some other sense: because they have no or hardly any freemen. We can talk about intellectuals in the case of all of the groups, since all of them had their own priests. Accordingly, the main difference is constituted by the existence or the lack of the feudal elite. This is fundamental, since essentially it was this feudal elite to “make” the history for the ethnic groups; they played a role in the political field that contained appropriate fora for political manifestations. We could even say that it was these ethnic groups that the leaders and highest-level directors of the multiethnic empires knew and took notice of. If only because these feudal elites had the appropriate political fora. This was the case within the Habsburg Empire only – and in the Polish-Lithuanian state as long as it existed –, moreover in the Baltic areas that shifted from Swedish (or German) rule to Russian more or less in these times. For the sake of simplicity, I would call the first type, the ethnic group with a complete social structure, a “noble ethnic group” and the other one a “non-noble ethnic group”. Naturally, this is far from trying to reflect any value judgement, that is, that the first is nobler, more distinguished, better, more positive, etc. than the other. It is merely a short name for the two social formulas we can see here. In the same way, we could talk about ethnicities of A and B types or we could call one alpha and the other beta or even omega. It seems, however, that the attributives “noble” and “non-

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noble” can be more easily remembered, since they refer to the main difference between the two types in some form.

In two of the three (or four) empires, in the Habsburg and the Russian, we encounter a form of state in the second half of the 18th century that the contemporaries called enlightened despotism, while later historiography opted for enlightened absolutism (with certain courtesy). The essence of the system was that the state, that is, the empire had to be developed through reforms so that it could be raised, first of all in the field of the military, to the level of the (developed) Western states. The reforms included: increasing the population with settlements, the development of economic life, industry – through the organisation of manufactories – and also agriculture, since the population had to be provided with food. The adoption – or at least an attempt at this – of the achievements of the agricultural revolution that had started in England and Holland at the beginning of the 18th century was part of the developments, with the introduction of new plants and new production methods. Enlightened absolutism, in theory, would have settled the fate of the peasants as well, however this happened only in the Habsburg Empire with the urbarial reforms of Maria Theresa, which were introduced almost in all of the provinces of the empire. Essentially, they sought to move the landlord-peasant tenant relation from the field of private law to that of public law, moreover to make it a task of the state to establish the extent of peasant services and the size of the land given to them. This could not be carried out in Russia because of the resistance of the nobility.

The introduction of agricultural reforms and the spreading of new production methods made it necessary to address the peasants, who made up most of the population, in a language they would understand. This was a clearly rational step on the part of the authorities even if there existed koines, languages, in certain empires that most of the population could use for communication. This was German in the Habsburg Empire, naturally Russian in Russia, Polish in the Polish-Lithuanian state, and Greek (not Turkish!) in the Ottoman Empire. However, these languages were far from being suited for the spreading and teaching of the new farming methods. The central power, as a result of the essence of the actual system of the Eastern European empires, issued an increasing number of decrees in order to control the everyday life of the people as closely as possible and to keep record of their personal data. The priests in the churches explained the decrees and there existed posters in the last decades of the century in the cities: although most of the population was illiterate, there was always someone who was able to read them. Let us emphasise that this was a rational measure suggested by the Reason, without any ethnic (“national”) purpose.

No matter how we look at this, the language, through which the state power tried to get closer to its subjects for the sake of its own reforms, was a language that we know today under the denomination: mother tongue. Naturally, in those times, mother tongue meant some local dialect or a generally used tongue but these languages had no system of rules, grammar or orthography back then. To cite an

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example, which concerns us: in the course of the introduction of the urbarial reform of Maria Theresa, the delegated commissioners had to ask questions, grouped into 14 points, from the rural population. In Hungary, these points were drafted and printed in Latin, German and, besides Hungarian, in Slovak as well. In Croatia, this happened in Latin, German and, naturally, in Croatian.

It was at this point that the state policies got in touch with those movements, which historiography calls national revival, national awakening or national renewal. In reality, these movements were the initiatives of limited intellectual circles in the case of all of the ethnic groups. These started out from the consideration that the nation, to which they (the few dozen intellectuals) belonged, was in a dormant state and had to be awakened. ("Wake up your dormant national spirit" – wrote Berzsenyi, true, a bit later, at the beginning of the 19th century. Similar poems can also be cited in the case of other peoples of the Habsburg Empire as well, even from earlier times.)

An outstanding Czech historian of our days, Miroslav Hroch elaborated the three periods of the national movements of the small peoples of Europe. The first of these is exactly the one, when only a few dozen persons realise that they belong to a virtual nation. This happens so primarily in the case of the non-noble ethnic groups of the empire. The Slovak Juraj Fándly, a Catholic priest, prepared a work entitled "Diligent household and agricultural farmer" on the basis of the local Slovak dialect, used at the University of Nagyszombat (Trnava) since the times of Pázmány, in order to develop the knowledge, primarily the agricultural knowledge, of the people. At the same time, this work was a typical manifestation of Enlightenment of German inspiration.

The coincidence of the official goals of the state and the developing movements was possible because these movements of national revival had two basic problems: the lack of national (literary) tongue and national literature, moreover the necessity of their establishment. These two features would have a fundamental role in the wider diffusion of the movements and the establishment of national identity in the first half of the 19th century. At the beginnings, however, in the era of the Enlightenment, only the first feature had an essential role, while interest taken in history became important only later on. This, too, had elements connected to the Age of Enlightenment but Romanticism would offer much more stimuli in this respect.

These features had an important role primarily in the Habsburg Empire, mostly because this was an empire with noble and non-noble ethnic groups of considerable population.

The Czech were somewhere between the noble and non-noble types, since their aristocracy had become Germanised to a great extent by the second half of the 18th century, while the lesser nobility, as we perceive this class, disappeared during the Counter-Reformation (because nobles devoted to Protestantism – either to its Evangelical or Czech Brethren form – were constrained to emigrate if they were not willing to convert to Catholicism). In reality, the Czechs have had their literary tongue, into which they translated the Biblical texts, since the Hussite

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period. Now, this became one of the animating elements of the movement. The Department of the Czech language, headed by Josef Martin Pelcl, was established at the University of Prague in 1793 and it was then that performances began to be held in Czech in Prague, in the palace of the counts of Nostic (the building is still standing). Yet, there remained a lot to do in order to develop the Czech literary tongue. A Jesuit, Josef Dobrovský, who worked at various noble families – which basically acted as patrons of his – after the order had been dissolved, played a major role in this. Dobrovský had outstanding achievements not only with respect to the formulation of Czech grammar but we can also consider him one of the founders of the discipline of Slavonic Studies. It might be strange that it is in a Catholic priest that we can encounter the master of the Czech movement started under the influence of Enlightenment. Yet, Dobrovský was a disciple of Enlightenment as well. At the same time, it is another important circumstance that he wrote his scientific works, one after another, in the German language because, in his opinion, the Czech tongue had not yet become well suited for that. The language reform will ensure that but it will be the achievement of the following century and the work of a new generation.

Concerning the Hungarians (since Hungarians formed the other major ethnic group of the empire), let us draw attention to the activities of the writers among the members of the Noble Guard of Vienna, the protégés of Maria Theresa, who received the ideas of the Enlightenment – essentially their moderate, German variety – in Vienna firsthand. At the same time, Csokonai writes that “as a Rousseau in Ermenonville, I’ll be a man and a citizen”: that is, he was familiar with the French variety but did not want to follow the Jacobins. That this was a product of the Enlightenment, Hungarian literary history asserted this long ago – in addition to the role this had in the establishment of national identity.

In the case of the Croats, every reform movement started somewhat later than in the case of the Hungarians, although in the person of Ruder Bošković, canon of Zagreb, they also had a disciple of Enlightenment already around the mid 18th century. The language question came into prominence rather quickly for them as well. The language reform of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić would be accepted in the framework of a co-operation of Southern Slav inspiration with the Serbs at the beginning of the 19th century. This was a great step ahead because up until then, besides the Old Church Slavonic used in the church – which was a dead language similar to Latin –, they used the so-called Slav–Serb as a literary language, which reminds one of the Russian of the era with numerous Serb words taken from the vernacular. It was in this language that Jovan Rajić wrote his four-volume work on the history of the Croats, the Bulgarians, but first of all the Serbs, which also had an important role in the historical establishment of the movement. The first edition of the great work was published in 1762. In connection to this, it must be pointed out that all this evolved in a territory of the Habsburg Empire inhabited by the Serbs, in the Határórvidek, situated partly in Southern Hungary. The Serb population under Ottoman rule was left out of all this, since Enlightenment did not reach them in any of its forms.

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In the case of the Slovaks, we encounter the first attempt at the establishment of the literary tongue at the turn of the century, through the work of canon Anton Bernolák (a priest again!). We note it here that some 70–80% of the Slovaks was Catholic and 20–30% Evangelical. They had their own literary tongue, since they used the Czech language of the Bible translation of the Hussite era. This was archaic, moreover Czech, that is, not Slovak. Bernolák elaborated a new literary tongue on the basis of the Western Slovak dialect he was familiar with, wrote down its grammar in Latin and used this language in his five language (Latin-German-Hungarian-Czech-Slovak) vocabulary as well. (The historians of subsequent periods did not hesitate to rebuke him because of the Hungarian element and write about the fact that he submitted to the Hungarians.) The Catholic Slovaks generally accepted the Bernoláčtina and in the following century, a Catholic priest (!) called Ján Holly wrote long (and, today, unreadably boring) epic poems in this Bernolák-language on Svätopluk, Cyrill and Metod.

The Romanians were in a particular situation. Two Romanian states, principalities had existed since the 14th century, Havaselve or Havasalföld (in Romanian Țara românească, that is, Romanian country) and Moldova. These had been subordinated first to Hungary and Poland and, after the appearance of the Turkish, they became vassal-principalities of the Ottoman Empire. They developed a complete social structure but without the forms of the feudal orders, amongst rather backward circumstances. Enlightenment could hardly have any effect here. The situation was different in Transylvania, where the Habsburg government promoted the accession of Orthodox Romanians to the Western Church, their union, and generously provided for the education of the Uniate clergy. They studied in Vienna and, several of them in Rome, and discovered that their language derived from Latin, similar to French and Italian. Three of the Uniate priests Samuil Micu-Klein, Petru Maior and Gheorghe Șincai were censors for some time at the Buda University Press and Șincai was a tutor at Transylvanian aristocrat families later on. They wrote in part linguistic and in part historic works and although these appeared in print only much later, during the 19th century, they had a major role at the beginnings of the Romanian national movement already in their own age, at the turn of the 18th and the 19th century. They were convinced about pure Roman origins.

We have already talked about the Serbs of the Habsburg Empire in connection to the canonisation of the language. Several Serb representatives of Enlightenment lived in a diaspora in Hungary and Vienna and came under the influence of Enlightenment there. Occasionally, there were persons among them who were not from the territory of the Monarchy, the Határövidék, like Dositej Obradović, who was originally an Orthodox monk from the Serb territory under Ottoman rule. However, he left his monastery, wandered all around much of Europe and wrote his still enjoyable autobiography clearly under the influence of Enlightenment. He, however, worked prior to Vuk Karadžić, so he wrote his works in the Slav–Serb language. At last, he ended up in the territory of the

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Habsburg Empire, in Southern Hungary, and continued to exert an individual but significant influence on the Serb movement.

If the diaspora that lived in the various European countries had an important role in the case of the Serbs, it was even more true in the case of the Greeks. Their society was not complete either, they were peasants and merchants, with the latter settling in the Habsburg Empire in great numbers; the traces of the presence of the Greeks can still be found in Pest. Similar to the Serbs, they settled primarily along the Danube, since this was the main trade route. However, along the other waterway, that is, the Mediterranean, they arrived as far as Marseilles and had colonies in other cities in the West as well. Thanks to their mobility and sensitivity, they quickly came under the influence of Enlightenment. They translated quite a lot of Western, primarily French works into Greek in the last decade of the 18th century. As we have mentioned, Greek was the koine on the Balkans, so these translations also reached and influenced members of other ethnic groups in the Balkans. It has to be noted that although the Greeks did not have their own aristocracy, practically only they were present in the administration, more exactly, in the foreign relations institutions of the Ottoman Empire, since they knew well the more important European languages. It was not so much the memory of the ancient Greeks to shape their national identity: the enthusiast Western European philhellenics knew much more about that. What they knew, however, was the medieval Byzantine Empire. They considered themselves the heirs of Byzantium, so the Greek national movement laid claims to the revival of the Byzantine Empire and what this implied: power over the whole of the Balkans.

As Enlightenment had no effect on the Serbs of the Ottoman Empire, it had no considerable effect on Bulgarians either. Although posterior Bulgarian historiography liked to refer to the history of Bulgaria written by father Paisij in 1762 (which also survived in dozens of hand-written copies) as to an impression made by Enlightenment, we cannot accept this. The historiography of the party-state exalted Paisij, this representative of the peasantry, who had trained himself to be a historiographer (naturally, in one of the monasteries of Mount Athos). However, it turned out by the 1980s that he had originated from a rich merchant family. Enlightenment made no essential marks on his short work reminiscent to medieval chronicles. Moreover, the Orthodox Church did not like these kinds of mundane ideas either.

The Albanians (or Arnauts, as they were called back then) were still the most enthusiastic supporters and most reliable soldiers of the Ottoman Empire, so the thought of any kind of secession could not even emerge. Although the Italo-albanians, who settled in Southern Italy following their flight from before the Ottoman conquest in the late Middle Ages, were not indebted to the Turkish Empire, their mostly peasant population did not get into contact with Enlightenment.

If we look at the non-noble ethnic groups or even most of the noble ones in Eastern Europe, we can find the first signs of national "awakening" in the last decades of Enlightenment, moreover it is in these societies that we can find the

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first signs of the enlightened intellectual horizon. However, national movements did not start among the non-noble ethnic groups under the Russian Empire, first of all the Baltic peoples or the Ukrainians, in the late 18th century. If we start out – with good reason – from the fact that the age of Enlightenment survived the French revolution by one or two decades, these national movements started so late that we can hardly talk about a late Enlightenment in their case. To a certain extent, it is really the influence of Enlightenment we can perceive in the fact that two German Lutheran pastors living there, Gottlieb Merkel and Garlieb Johann Petri published a book, naturally, in German, on the situation of the Estonians and the Latvians around 1800. Later movements would cite these as predecessors but still, we cannot consider them cases bearing the mark of Enlightenment. What we have shown is true in a certain sense to Lithuanians as well, although they were not under Swedish-German-Russian rule but under Polish supremacy in the times of the Enlightenment, which did not leave major impressions on them.

If we have so far found the Hungarians and the Czechs the more developed ones among the noble ethnic groups, in the case of whom Enlightenment played a clear role in the development of their national movement, in the same way, among the Slovenians of Austria who can be considered the most developed ones among non-noble ethnic groups, we can also find traces of the philosophical movement of the Enlightenment. The person of the first Slovenian language teacher, Marko Pohlin, is an example for this. However, this was only the beginning of the Slovenian movement that would not cause great excitement later on either.

We could even close our discussion at this point, since we cannot really find a national movement interpreted in the above-mentioned way, implying cultural and linguistic aspirations, in the case of the two noble ethnic groups, the situation of which we have only mentioned without having shown the origins of the national movement and the influence Enlightenment had on it. And yet, it is not merely two insignificant ethnic groups we are talking about: they are the Polish and the Russians. Therefore, we shall discuss their cases in the following.

As we have mentioned, the Polish-Lithuanian state was divided by its neighbours who thus erased the Polish nation from the map exactly in the last decades of Enlightenment. (Subsequent to this, their homeland had to be called like this, since the political elite, the nobility had considered themselves clearly as Polish, members of the *natio Polonica*.)

It is customary to say (not among the Polish, though!) that one of the reasons of the disappearance of the Polish state can be traced back to the lack of absolutism, the unlimited predominance of feudal-noble powers over the central power. There is some truth to this: the institutional system of enlightened absolutism, a characteristic phenomenon not only in Eastern Europe but along the whole periphery of contemporary Europe, did not evolve here. Naturally, it has to be added that at the time when, after the several-decade-long, what is more, century-long noble anarchy and unilateral Russian influence, some reform era began with the enthronement of Stanislaus Augustus in 1764 (who was

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helped to power exactly by the Russian state, more exactly, Empress Catherine II, that had an influence on the sovereign), the measures revealed a strong influence of the Enlightenment. The Commission of National Education, the first ministry of public education was established here in 1765. It started to develop public education, secondary education in the first place, on the basis of rather modern principles. The leaders of the reforms, Stanisław Staszic and Hugo Kołłątaj (both, as it is fitting in the case of the Polish, were Catholic priests) were expressly the supporters of Enlightenment, under the influence of its radical, French version. As it was natural that they were Catholic priests, it was also natural in the given domestic and European intellectual environment that both were Freemasons, similar to the king, Stanislaus Augustus. The issue of the language, which was so important everywhere, emerged rather early, in the form of the so-called “demakaronizacja”. This Polish word, which is difficult to translate, meant that they aimed, among others, to decrease the influence of Latin, which had functioned as an official language far too long, and “root out” superfluous Latin (and other) words from the language. The other task, fundamental everywhere, had been completed by the ancestors back in the 16th century when the Bálint Balassi of the Polish, Jan Kochanowski wrote his poems in this language and at the same literary level as the Hungarian poet, a contemporary of his.

Nobody talked about national awakening or revival, since the nation (more exactly, the nobility which made up about 10% of the population, most of whom were uncultured, in some cases even illiterate, nobles vegetating without a land, living on the bread of the aristocrats) had existed for long and it also preserved its independence against the central power (this ten percent was an incredibly high proportion in contemporary Europe, where nobles made up 0.5–1% of the population at most). This nobility was convinced that they preserved their independence, “golden freedom” (which was an everyday slogan in that era).

Only the shock of the first division of 1773 made the small group of nobles of European erudition realise that freedom should be protected not against the king but primarily against the neighbours. The majority got over the shock soon and began to live enchanted by the unique and splendid noble freedom (in most of the cases on a land big as a peasant holding or downright without a land).

The king and the really handful enlightened nobility got into contact not simply with French enlightenment, since, in the meanwhile, the French revolution had started, aiming at the realisation of the principles of Enlightenment. Following the second division of 1793, the politicians asked for the help of revolutionary France, led, in those times, by the Jacobin dictatorship. However, the Jacobins wanted to know what the Polish had done for the peasants. It turned out, it was not much. Although a feudal assembly was convened in 1788, which voted for the constitution drafted after the example of the French one on May 3, 1791 (today a national holiday in Poland), the Polish state transformed into a constitutional monarchy, into a purely Polish one, while nobody thought about the Lithuanians. Naturally, not even the Lithuanian political elite, since they, as part

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of the *natio Polonica*, considered themselves Polish in the modern sense of the word. (There will be many who will realise after the Polish uprising of 1830/31 that they are not Polish after all.) Everything was very nice in the constitution of 1791 with the exception that the majority of the Polish population, the peasant tenants and peasants, were not included in it. The constitution did not change their situation at all. When, in 1794, in a practically hopeless situation, another revolt broke out in the “mutilated” country against the neighbours who had divided them up, the Polish hero of the American War of Independence, Tadeusz Kościuszko, who had just returned home and led the revolt, declared in the law of Polaniec: the peasant tenants, who join the armed battle would be granted personal freedom. Otherwise, those who had to perform three days of sowing every week, would have only two from then on. The decree contained a lengthy enumeration of the modifications of the arrangement of peasant services. These regulations could be regarded as petty changes, since, in the meanwhile, the remarkable commander, the Russian Suvorov had already occupied Warsaw, the Polish capital. From then on, the national movement had to fight for the re-establishment of a non-existent state. A rather complicated process led to this, which fundamentally differed from those we have seen above. However, the original movement, in spite of every petty feature it had, carried the influence of the Enlightenment more markedly than it was revealed in the case of the others.

And the Russians? We have not yet talked about their national awakening. Seemingly, it is fully justified that we neglected them, since neither the contemporaries, nor posterior historiography used such expressions in connection to them. Modern sociology distinguished two ways of the evolution the development of a nation. One path is the “state to nation”, the other is “nation to state”. That is, in the first case, there exists the state, which, sooner or later, develops the awareness in its subjects that they belong to the state – and in the same form, as they would belong to a nation. More or less, this process took place in the Western European countries, moreover the countries that evolved through decolonisation in the second half of the 20th century made an attempt at this. The other, we could say, typically Eastern European path, is when the nation comes into being first and it develops some state for itself.

Naturally, this is not so simple. A few several-hundred-year-old states exist in Eastern Europe as well, which, from a certain respect, could be classified into the first type (Polish, Czechs, Hungarians, Croats). The Serbs, as we could see, form an even more contradictory structure because the Serb nation is under development within it and, in the era of the Habsburg Empire, in some form, a Serb state evolved. This happened, in reality, in a strong subordination to other powers but, formally, under the Ottoman Empire. However, the population living here would learn that they are Serbs only much later.

The Russian state had existed for long, for a thousand years prior to 1863. True, we can find opinions in earlier Russian historiography according to which we can talk about a state only subsequent to the unification of Russian territory (which had

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been divided into principalities), that is, after the beginning of the 16th century. As far as our train of thought is concerned, these two kinds of origins are not important, since in one way or another, a Russian state exists at the beginning of the 16th century the latest. This seems exotic in Europe, which results in its isolation. The country and the people are not known very much and this changes only after the beginning of the 18th century when the activities of Peter I become known all around Europe. By the time of the Seven Years' War, it was proved that the outcome of a war, the victory of one of the parties, in this case, the victory of the Prussians, could be decided with the involvement of Russia.

It is clear that starting from the unification, the ruling elite conducting the affairs of the state was aware of the Russian characteristic of this state in the sense that its name was Russia and that the subjects of the state (mostly peasant tenants), were Russians. Those on power knew it well in Moscow and then in Saint Petersburg that this was the usual arrangement in European countries. They did not take notice of the fact that this was so in their case, since they should have gotten to know the subjects more thoroughly for that.

Starting from the 16th century, the Russian state had been acquiring colonial territories in Siberia, the inhabitants of which were also called "of another race" (inorodcū). Then, we could see how the state expanded towards the West during the Polish divisions and through the annexation of the Baltic states and, towards the South, reached the Southern coastal region of the Black Sea and obtained even the Crimea. The government continued to see merely subjects in the inhabitants and it deemed it natural that these subjects were all Russians, given that they were all subjects of the Russian tsar, later emperor.

The Eastern Slavonic population (this is posterior science's arbitrary differentiation) that came under Russia through the Polish divisions, if we can talk about a collective identity at all in their case, it was that they called themselves Pravoslavs, that is, persons of Orthodox faith. This was all that their identity contained. As both Ukrainians and Belorussians were Orthodox as well, this did help much in separating them from the Russians. All in all, everybody was a subject of the Russian sovereign, that is, they were Russians even if they had no idea about this. Therefore, in this respect, the population of Russia was in a completely different situation than the ethnicities we have discussed before.

What can we say about the focus of our research, Enlightenment, in Russia? An early, strongly practical version of it appeared already with Peter the Great. He was then succeeded in the second half of the century by an empress, another person worthy of the Great attributive, Catherine. She was a conscious representative of Enlightenment not only by her own admission but also according to the contemporaries who knew her and in the eyes of the foreigner who got into touch with her. Enlightenment became not only a fashion in Russia during the decades of her rule (as in many other European countries) but almost an obligatory task, a "homework" for the nobility. Several refined Russian nobles wrote various essays on philosophical questions, justice and morals on the basis

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of their French readings. Many of these works survived in manuscripts and the influence of Enlightenment among the nobility can clearly be demonstrated. Catherine herself boasted about being a philosopher (and not unfoundedly!) and about her activities with respect to it, which exerted a fundamental influence on the life of the state as well. (Her collected writings were published in 12 massive volumes around the end of the 19th century.)

Enlightenment, therefore, was present and exercised an influence. The demand for a language emerged around middle of the 18th century, somewhat similar to the other ethnic groups of Eastern Europe. M. V. Lomonosov, the “irregular” intellectual (he was not of noble origin but came from among the free peasants of the North; his father was a fisherman), appeared as a polyhistor, with philosophical, economic, historic and also literary works. He, too, wrote odes in honour of Catherine diligently. And he elaborated a theory on the Russian language. He believed that depending on the subject, three kinds of Russians had to be used: when writing about elevated things, the one in which the influence of the Old Church Slavonic was still relevant (many words like this still exist in Russian today). To express less official but nevertheless serious matters the language to be used was the one of the erudite (noble) society. In merriment, forms close to the language of the people were to be used. The Russian literary, that is, national language evolved from this tripartite literary language canonised in the 1760s. Not only Lomonosov wrote odes to Catherine but also Nikolai Gerzavin, who was a statesman, senator and even minister. Quite late, Karmazin, who was a significant personality as a historian as well, established even sentimental literature with his short novel (to use a modern concept) entitled “Poor Lisa”. In the age of Catherine, several comic papers appeared; she, too, published one and polemicised in it with the authors of other papers. Literary life and the movement of language reform evolved.

Subordinated to all these factors, the formation of the Russian nation happened differently than at other ethnic groups. Catherine herself tried to compensate for her German origin (and German accent which she had all her life) by proclaiming that her state was Russian. She declared her foreign policy achievements as the victories of the Russian state. The statesmen in the various positions around her (almost all of them Russians) also emphasised the Russian character of the state and the subjects, and took steps in the name of the Russian state in their foreign relations activities. The upper layer of the nobles adopted this identity. The national component made an impression on the rather closed stratum of the city-dwellers, not to talk about the peasants, only much later.

Catherine embodied the Russian Empire and the awareness about this reached the upper strata. The next step came with the victory over Napoleon about which at least the peasants affected by the campaigns got to know as well. However, it must be clear from all this that Russian national identity was not the invention of a few intellectuals, as many believe, but a very conscious and deliberate enterprise of the state power. This so expressly belongs to the “state to nation” tendency as the more or less contemporary French one.

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In 1790, the Serbs of the Habsburg Empire, overjoyed about the death of Joseph II, held an ecclesiastic, essentially a national congress in Temesvár (Timisoara) on the basis of their charter received from Leopold II (which figured temporary stay as a matter of fact). There, they called the Hungarians orangutans, evidently not in sign of sympathy or respect. Similar manifestations regarding the movement of some other ethnic group can be considered exceptions in that era. In 1790, not only the Serbs but Hungarians, Romanians and even the Transylvanian Saxons celebrated the death of the emperor. This agreement, however, will become increasingly rarer, while a great future was ahead of conflicts. The episode of the Enlightenment at the beginning of the movements did not leave its mark on the ensuing developments.

We have started out of the fact that originally and in theory the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, which put the Person in the limelight, made its way into the national movement, the beginnings of the national movement in Eastern Europe (with the exception of the Russian case). Naturally, if we think about the fact that, at the time of the French revolution, only a small part of the inhabitants of the country spoke the French language but in a few revolutionary years, all would become the citizens of a “one and indivisible” France and, therefore, French, then the role of Enlightenment in Eastern Europe might not seem so exceptional after all.