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Lecture delivered on 17 September 2015 to the conference:

The Dynamics of Lithuanian-Polish Relations: Cooperation in the EU,

held at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania.

## **LITHUANIA AND POLAND IN THE LAST MILLENNIUM: BETWEEN THE MARGINS AND THE HEART OF EUROPE**

Twenty-six kilometres north of Vilnius lies the geographical centre of Europe. Twenty-six years ago, its location was calculated by the French Institut Géographique National – at a time when the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic still existed. Perhaps, in that year of 1989, when about two million Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians linked hands to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact on 23 August, the centre of Europe was also its heart.

As the organ which pumps blood through the human body, the heart is admittedly, somewhat off-centre. As a metaphor for the feelings, it has no fixed abode. The poetic concept of the *Heart of Europe* was claimed for Poland by the nineteenth-century bard Juliusz Słowacki and seconded by the historian Norman Davies.<sup>1</sup> And perhaps, on 4 June 1989 the heart of Europe was in Poland, when partially free elections saw *Solidarność* crush the Polish United Workers' Party and its allies. The very same day, the Chinese Communist Party crushed pro-democracy demonstrators on Tiananmen Square. We do not yet know which of the two outcomes of 4 June 1989 will, in the long term, prove more significant.

Ultimately, the claim to be the centre of Europe is as subjective as the claim to be the heart. This is because Europe – the western end of the great Eurasian landmass – is a construction of human geography, and is not determined by the

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, 2nd edn, Oxford, 2001, p. x.

current location of tectonic plates. Africa and South America are linked to their neighbours only by narrow isthmuses, each now pierced by a canal. But Europe has no clear natural frontiers to the east. Geographers have long disputed where Europe ends. The current consensus – along the Urals, the Volga, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus and the Black Sea – may not last much longer. Geologically, the Indian sub-continent is more distinct from Asia than is Europe.

The point is worth emphasizing, because the idea of a *European* civilization, which during a period of about four hundred years expanded into and profoundly altered most of our planet, was for long unthinkable. The first great civilizations arose in warmer climes than north-western Europe. The Graeco-Roman civilization so often claimed as the ancestor of our own stretched right around the Mediterranean Sea, centred on Athens, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome, with its greatest wealth in North Africa.

The lands which most of us would now consider the economic and political centre, or to adopt the bodily metaphor, the pumping heart of Europe – roughly the quadrilateral between Amsterdam, London, Paris and Frankfurt – were then a marginal zone at the frontiers of the Western Roman Empire. After its fall, the political centre of gravity moved north of the Alps. Charlemagne's renewed Western Roman empire, with its capital at Aachen, approximated to the territory of the original six members of the Brussels-centred European Economic Community. But it was outshone by the civilizations of Near and Far East.

Only when the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth Christian centuries had brought the southern shores of the Mediterranean into a wealthier, and technically superior Islamic world centred on Damascus and later Baghdad, did it become possible to imagine a Christianity centred in the former north-western margins of the civilized world. This Christendom, following the conversions of Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Rus' and much of Scandinavia towards the end of the first Christian millennium, came to approximate to what we know as 'Europe'. The

spread of Christianity to Samogitia was finally achieved in the fifteenth century. The Sami of the Arctic held out longer still.

In European discourses, ‘Christendom’ – *Christianitas* – was only generally replaced by ‘Europe’ during the seventeenth century. By around 1700, Christian Europe’s competitors – the Ottoman Empire, the Qing Empire in China, and the Mughal Empire in India – had begun their retreat. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would see Europeans dominate the globe.

This expansion, however, was not inevitable; nor – against five or six millennia of recorded human history – would European hegemony last especially long. In the first half of the twentieth century Europe tore itself apart, only to be rescued – twice – by its North American progeny.

The Europe we live in today is an infinitely better place than the ruins of 1945, but even when it does pull together, it is of much diminished global significance. The pumping political and economic heart of the world has moved elsewhere. Europe can probably contribute most to the Earth’s foreseeable future through culture, not least that encoded in the global *lingua franca* – English. As recently as 2005 the historian Tony Judt could hope that ‘the twenty-first century might yet belong to Europe.’<sup>2</sup> There were grounds for optimism in the expansion of the European Union, in the adoption of a single currency, in growing and spreading prosperity, and in the moves towards a European constitution, which culminated in the Lisbon Treaty. Then came severe and still unresolved financial and economic crises, hapless responses to the Arab Spring and its consequences, acquiescence in the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and the current kneejerk reactions to refugees and migrants from the Near East and Africa. Confidence in European identity, heritage and values is now, I suggest, quite rare.

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<sup>2</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, London, 2005, p. 800.

Before we consider Lithuania and Poland ‘between the margins and heart of Europe’, we should pause to reflect,

first, that the current – north-western – heart of Europe was once located at the margins of civilization;

second, that Europe moved suddenly from the margins to the heart of the world, and is now moving back towards the margins;

third, that the very idea of Europe was only possible following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century, and the near-collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire in the seventh;

and fourth, that the very word ‘Europe’ could only replace ‘Christendom’ in common use after the division of western Christendom, and the global expansion of Christianity at European hands.

If ‘Europe’, therefore, is not a given and stable reality, but a relatively recent and mutable idea, we should expect that the places and roles of Lithuania and Poland within Europe should also have changed, and changed repeatedly. We should also expect them to change in future.

The first surviving mentions of Poland in the sources come from the 960s, although the names ‘Polanie’ and ‘Polonia’ are only definitely attested from about 1000 onwards. These first mentions refer respectively to wars with their western neighbours, the marriage of Duke Mieszko to a Christian Czech princess, and the subsequent baptism of the Duke and his subjects. By far the most informative source are the observations of a Sephardic Jew in Cordoban service, Ibrahim-ibn-Yaqub, who visited Mieszko’s lands in 965-66. He recorded a polity of considerable power, territory and wealth. If Poland seems to leap into written sources from nowhere, recent archaeological findings have shown the dramatic destruction of existing settlements and the rapid construction of substantial new fortified strongholds in the mid-tenth century. By the millennial year of 1000 AD, this rough newcomer was a fully-fledged member of Latin, or Western European

Christendom: the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Adalbert at Gniezno, honoured Duke Boleslaw the Valiant – and agreed to the foundation of an archbishopric at Gniezno, dependent only on the papacy. Many of Poland's later rulers would encounter rather less respect from their German neighbours.

Adalbert, or Vojtěch, or Wojciech, bishop of Prague, had met a martyr's death beyond the river Vistula, while trying to convert the Prussians, one of the Baltic-speaking peoples of the region (peoples who had been mentioned by various ancient and early medieval writers). In Adalbert's footsteps followed St Bruno of Querfurt, who in 1009 met a similar fate 'in confinio Rusciæ et Lituaë'.<sup>3</sup> This first recorded mention of Lithuania occurs in the Annals of Quedlinburg in Germany, now preserved only in a sixteenth-century copy.

So the first recorded contacts of Lithuania and Poland with Christian Europe produced very different results. Poland accepted baptism, and was accepted into Latin Christendom. However, after the glory of the Gniezno summit had faded, Poland remained at the civilizational and political margins of Christendom for the next three hundred years or so. In contrast, people at the borders of Lithuania decapitated a Christian missionary, just as the Prussians had done twelve years earlier. The Lithuanian heartlands remained pagan for a further four centuries or so – beyond the margins of Christendom. At first they were shielded from the swords and flaming torches of the mailed knights of Latin Christianity, less by their forests than by their Baltic brethren. Following the conquests of Livonia and Prussia by the Teutonic Order, the peoples of Aukštaitija and Žemaitija would encounter – and fiercely resist – this threat until an opportunity arose, in the 1380s, to join Western Christendom in a peaceful and voluntary union with Poland. By this time, however, most of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was already part of Christendom – Eastern Christendom.

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<sup>3</sup> Darius Baronas and S. C. Rowell, *The Conversion of Lithuania: From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians*, Vilnius [2015], p. 41.

St Bruno, let us recall, had been slain 'at the borders of Rus' and Lithuania'. Rus' was already Christian, its ruler St Volodymyr the Great having, we are told, preferred the heavenly splendours of Constantinople to the ceremonies of Rome. *Toutes proportions gardées*, in wealth and sophistication Kyivan Rus' also eclipsed its western neighbours: Poland and Hungary. But Rus' fragmented, and the all-conquering Mongols brought it devastation and submission in the first half of the thirteenth century. Lithuania could offer parts of Rus' an effective defence against them.

In the complex diplomacy of the mid-thirteenth century, two great rulers, Danilo of Halych and Mindaugas of Lithuania, flirted with Rome and received royal crowns. Their unions with Catholic, Western Christendom proved ephemeral; the Lithuanian heartlands stayed pagan, while south-western Rus' soon returned to the Orthodox fold. But over the next century and a half, especially under Gediminas, Algirdas and Vytautas, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania extended its sway over most of Rus' as Mongol power waned. By the time of the union with Poland, the political core of the Grand Duchy was still pagan, but many princes of the fecund Gediminid dynasty had taken Ruthenian wives, adopted east-Slavic Christianity, along with Slavic baptismal names, and ruled Ruthenian appanages. These constituted the greater part of the Grand Duchy.

Rather less spectacularly, the resurgent Kingdom of Poland also expanded into south-western Rus' during the fourteenth century – competing with Hungary, with whom it entered a brief personal union. So when Grand Duke Jogaila married his barely nubile Hungarian heiress St Jadwiga, and became King Władysław Jagiello in 1386, the two conjoined polities spanned the continental divide between Eastern and Western Christendom.

Lithuania and Poland together sprawled across a vast area, with the Grand Duchy briefly touching the shores of the Baltic and Black Seas simultaneously. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Jagiellonian dynasty also held the thrones of

Hungary and Bohemia – about a third of Europe, defined by today’s geographical criteria. This astonishing rise to prominence was part of a more general shift in Europe’s centre of gravity in the later Middle Ages. At a time when Western Europe experienced the demographic disaster known as the Black Death, with its accompanying cultural trauma, and when France and England were slugging it out in the Hundred Years’ War, much of Central and Eastern Europe flourished. The gap in economic development diminished considerably.

In terms of political sophistication, it is hard to detect any gap at all. By the mid-fourteenth century, the elites of Bohemia, Hungary and Poland all conceived of themselves as the leaders of the community of the realm, distinct both from the realm itself and the person of the king – and perfectly capable of running the realm in an interregnum. Lithuania was still a very different kind of state, but as Robert Frost has emphasized, it was to the *Corona regni Poloniae* – which he interprets as the community of the realm – and not to the *Regnum Poloniae* that that Jogaila promised to join the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>4</sup>

Following Frost’s line of argument, the subsequent Horodlo Union of 1413 may be understood as an invitation to join that community of the realm, issued to the principal, freshly converted Catholic families of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, on whose support both Jogaila and Vytautas particularly depended (Orthodox families were excluded). Shortly afterwards at the Council of Constance, Polish jurists, led by Paweł Włodkowic, brilliantly exposed the claims of the Teutonic Order that Lithuania’s baptism was a sham, while also explaining why agreements made with pagans should be honoured by Christians. Things had come very far indeed from purely patrimonial, let alone tribal polities. If it would be stretching things a little to claim that the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had become the heart of Christian Europe in the fifteenth century, they had at least come much closer. Especially in terms of values.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Frost, *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania*, vol. 1, *The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, 1385-1569*, Oxford, 2015, ch. 5.

This shift did not last. Much of the explanation is, I think, linked with the fate of Eastern Christendom. Potentially, the Lithuano-Polish position, straddling the continental divide between Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, could have facilitated a crucial role in restoring the unity of Christendom –such attempts were indeed made, both in the mid-fifteenth and at the end of the sixteenth centuries. However, Eastern Christendom had not fully recovered since the Mongol assault on Rus' and the Latin attack on Byzantium in the early thirteenth century. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 left the north-eastern principalities of Rus', beyond the overlordship of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, as the only remaining more or less independent Orthodox polities.

One of these, Muscovy, then subjected its neighbours and started to chip away at the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the north-east. Eastern Christendom had therefore itself become marginal to Christian Europe, while Orthodox Muscovy was able to put the Grand Duchy on the ideological as well as the military defensive. Ultimately, this is what drove the Lithuanian elites to accept, in 1569, a much closer union with Poland than hitherto. They strove, however, for a union between equal partners, as opposed to Lithuania's incorporation into Poland. In face of continued hostility from Orthodox Muscovy, the Ottoman Empire's advance northwards and the constant threat from its vassals, the Crimean Tatars, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would increasingly cast itself as the *antemurale christianitatis*. In other words, while claiming a place within understood as Latin or Western Christendom, it was also staking out a militant role at its margins. This role departed from reality at the end of the seventeenth century when the Commonwealth was in steep decline, but the myth proved a seductive one; we are not done with it yet.

Before that myth took hold, however, there were many glory days for the Commonwealth. And not only on the field of battle. Days when it was much closer to the heart of Europe. Its republican political culture, based on the hammering out of compromises for the sake of the common good, long managed religious

dissension better than any other major European polity. It expected a French prince, elected to the joint royal and grand ducal throne in 1573 despite his implication in the recent St Bartholomew's Day massacre, to swear to respect the solemn agreement reached earlier that year by citizens 'who were divided by religion' not to shed blood or in any way persecute each other. When he hesitated, he was told firmly: '*si non iurabis, non regnabis*'. He swore to maintain the Confederation of Warsaw, and although his reign in the Commonwealth was brief and ill-starred, he learned much from his experience of a consensual polity. The American historian James B. Collins has argued that Henry III was one of the most constitutionally scrupulous and wisest monarchs of early modern France. It was the Commonwealth which set standards of political culture.<sup>5</sup>

As the decades passed, and as the recovery of the Catholic Church proceeded apace, the Commonwealth's citizen-nobles grew increasingly ill-disposed towards non-Catholics among themselves. They expelled the most intellectually fertile among them— the anti-Trinitarians or Polish Brethren. In exile in the Dutch Republic, writers such as Andrzej Wiszowaty contributed mightily to that ferment of ideas which gave birth to the Enlightenment – in the intellectual and commercial heart of Europe. Yet the Commonwealth never became a fully confessionalized Catholic state. Protestants from elsewhere in Europe continued to settle there and enjoy religious toleration. The number of Jews grew rapidly, to the point when the Commonwealth was described ironically as the 'Paradisus Iudaeorum'. Moreover, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, religious pluralism fared rather better than in the Polish Crown, as the Scottish Calvinists of Kėdainiai, the Tatars and Karaim in the palatinate of Trakai, and many other communities bore witness.

As these settlements suggest, the Commonwealth never closed its doors on the rest of Europe. Wealthy citizens continued to travel abroad. But fewer stayed on to study. A sense of being uniquely blessed in providential liberty led to a certain

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<sup>5</sup> James B. Collins, 'Wpływ doświadczenia Henryka Walezjusza w Polsce na jego rządy we Francji', in *Rzeczpospolita wielu wyznań*, ed. Adam Kaźmierczyk *et al.*, Kraków, 2004, pp. 499-516.

narrowing of mental horizons; a pride in being distinct, a reluctance to compete. Did they consign themselves to the margins of Europe? But why should free citizens of the Commonwealth have envied the fate of successive, once-free nations subjected to monarchs who aimed at *absolutum dominium*? In their own minds at least, it was the citizens of the Commonwealth who cultivated the virtues articulated in the histories and rhetoric of the ancient Roman republic – the staple of their education.

Three partitions, in 1772, 1793 and 1795, wiped the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the map of Europe. Although states called ‘Poland’ and ‘Lithuania’ would be revived in the decades and centuries to come, the union of the Two Nations would never be restored. The crisis of the Commonwealth’s political system had all but eliminated its ability to defend itself by the early eighteenth century. But for some decades to come its constitutional paralysis suited its neighbours. The immediate causes of the destruction of the Commonwealth were its efforts to reform and strengthen itself – politically, administratively, culturally, socially and economically. Many of the reformers saw themselves as closing the gap which, in their view had opened up between the Commonwealth and ‘more enlightened nations’ in Europe.

Typically, Jean-Jacques Rousseau took a dissonant view, when he sought to persuade his Polish-Lithuanian readers that cosmopolitan, commercial and enlightened Europe was rushing towards its doom, and that only liberty-loving Poland still burnt with all the fire of its youth. Rousseau has often been accused of aiding the opponents of long-overdue reforms. But perhaps he was asking: what was Europe for? Decadent civilization or vigorous liberty? Where in that case was Europe’s heart?

Nevertheless, by setting aside most of Rousseau’s advice, in its last years the Commonwealth managed to implement wide-ranging enlightened reforms while revitalizing its republican liberty. Western European and North American

observers, for whom Poland had long been a joke, loudly proclaimed their admiration of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 – the second modern constitution in the world after the American, and the first in Europe. A subsequent law, passed unanimously on 20 October 1791, given the solemn title of ‘The Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations’ and declared to be an integral part of the Constitution, renewed and reinforced the Union between Poland and Lithuania. Lithuanian statesmen successfully insisted that the Union was the work of two equal nations, and that the consent of each was required to change its terms. Perhaps as a result, the level of support for the Constitution of 3 May expressed by the Lithuanian sejmiks was considerably higher than that expressed by their counterparts in the Polish Crown. Poland-Lithuania had again moved in from the margins of Europe. The response was a Russian invasion and a new partition. The Kościuszko Insurrection of 1794, which was the Commonwealth’s final testament before its foul murder by its neighbours, pointed the way to a revolutionary and Romantic future.

The three partitioning powers and their official historians sought to portray the Commonwealth as an anarchic anachronism, a monstrosity best swept away into oblivion in the name of orderly progress. Versions of this justification of the partitions have been accepted – and are accepted still – by many in the so-called West. They have even been accepted by many in the successor states and nations of the Commonwealth.

This vision is a gross distortion. In the 1790s three autocratic monarchies destroyed a going concern. They dismembered a Commonwealth founded on the consent of its citizens, individually and acting as its constituent parts. The Commonwealth was set on a road of evolutionary and constitutional transformation towards an orderly freedom, extended by degrees to all its inhabitants, which involved neither monarchical absolutism, nor social revolution. It was a route to the heart of enlightened Europe. The destruction of the Commonwealth made it easier to argue that ideas of constitutional and consensual

government, civic liberty and social progress were exclusively Western, to be adopted uncritically and wholesale by grateful Eastern Europeans, who should thereafter take every opportunity to remain silent and not bang on about their own quaint customs.

During the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, a Romantic vision of the lost *Respublica* inspired three generations of Polish and Lithuanian patriots to fight with extraordinary courage, not only for their own, but for others' freedom as well. Well might we say, with poets such as Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, that this role was at the heart of a revolutionary Europe. This was a heart in the truly Romantic sense, a heart of unrequited passion, tinged with melancholy and even madness. The price was high: arrested economic and social development at home, and the emigration of many of the brightest and best. Some of them made diverse and distinguished contributions to European civilization, but they did so in involuntary exile from their homeland.

Under autocratic foreign rule, the consensual, compromise-building, constitutional tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was lost. Indeed, it was explicitly revoked by self-consciously modern Lithuanian and Polish nation-builders alike. It was seen as a facade for the oppression of most of the population. When such men and women looked to the past, it was to an imagined, ethnically pure medieval past. Those who wished to restore an improved Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in an equal relationship with an improved and restored Poland, both of them liberal and tolerant of diversity, were marginalized. They often faced agonizing personal choices between mutually exclusive ethno-linguistic nationalisms. It was no longer acceptable to be both Lithuanian and Polish.

Perhaps this tragic parting of the ways was unavoidable. It became easy in the aftermath of the First World War, for *bien-pensant* Westerners to ignore centuries of constitutional and consensual government, and to caricature the supposedly 'new' nations of East-Central Europe as squabbling children – at the

dark margins of civilized Europe. The failure of parliamentary democracy, both in Poland and in Lithuania, in 1926, did not help.

And yet, both nation-states registered substantial achievements during Europe's difficult *interbellum*. If one achievement – Poland's defeat of the Soviet Union in 1920 – recharged the myth of *Antemurale Christianitatis* at the margins of Europe, others were about reducing the civilizational distance to its pumping heart. Great improvements were made in infrastructure and communications, in public health and literacy. They would not have been possible without drawing on deep reserves of public-spirited patriotism, enthused by the recovery of independent statehood in 1918. The modernist architecture of Kaunas is a striking declaration of confidence in the future; so too is the port of Gdynia. Even in politics it is important to maintain a sense of perspective. Although sometimes authoritarian and guilty of discrimination against minorities, neither state became a fascist tyranny. Indeed, both Smetona's and Pilsudski's regimes restrained the forces of extreme nationalism.

The 23rd of August 1939. In Moscow, Stalin looks on smugly as Molotov and Ribbentrop sign a pact to partition East-Central Europe between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The German invasion of Poland then precipitates the British and French declarations of war on Germany, but neither come to Poland's aid. Then Stalin gets in on the act, attacking Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. Deportations, deaths, despair. For the next six years, as the two totalitarian regimes engage in a fight to the finish, Europe's bloodlands<sup>6</sup> – largely corresponding to the Commonwealth of old – are Europe's bleeding heart. Once-mighty Europe is in ruins, its civilization economically and morally on the verge of bankruptcy.

As the Iron Curtain falls across Europe, Lithuanians are re-incarcerated in the Soviet Union itself. Poles are allowed a satellite regime – with a bit more leeway

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<sup>6</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, London, 2010.

after 1956. From a Western perspective, especially after the founding of the European Economic Community in 1957, these are distant margins indeed. In economic terms, the interwar gap between the successor states of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the successor states of Charlemagne's empire becomes a post-war chasm. But from those distant, oppressed and impoverished margins, the love of freedom stirs. 'Be not afraid' says John Paul II. Principles such as *nic o nas bez nas* – nothing concerning us without our participation – are dusted down. The spirit of *Solidarność* catalyses the fall of the Communist satellite regimes. The spirit of *Sajūdis* catalyses the fall of the Soviet Union itself.

Have the margins of Europe become the heart? Perhaps, for a poetic moment, yes – although it is the fall of the Berlin Wall that truly captures the West's imagination. After the euphoria comes disillusion, as the West loses interest and the extent of the necessary economic, political, and mental reconstruction becomes clear. The temptations of populism are great. The celebrations of 2004, marking the entry of Lithuania, Poland and eight other countries into the European Union, are no foregone conclusion. They are achieved by foresight, determination, painstaking work, and broad social consensus. They have also required the political will to accept current frontiers unconditionally, and to agree to differ about the past in the name of neighbourly co-operation.

Over a decade has now passed since then, and one could argue that Lithuania and Poland have moved far from the margins of Europe. They are members of a club, which is not encouraging new applications for membership. Living conditions do not begin to approach those in Donbas or Transnistria – although there is anxiety over where Vladimir Putin will strike next. Lithuania and Poland are relatively little affected by the challenges to Europe from militant Islamist terror, or the great migration of refugees, which one of its consequences. Nor do they seem likely to follow Greece into financial meltdown. Perhaps the safest place in Europe is neither at its pumping heart, nor its margins, but somewhere in between?

Rousseau, for one, would have snorted in derision. Do not aspire to be second-rate, derivative Europeans, he would have urged. Cherish liberty, because struggling for freedom has made you what you are.

Nor would Adam Mickiewicz have been impressed. His poetic diatribe, *Romantyczność*, against the blindness of purely scientific knowledge – symbolized by the highly respected rector of Vilnius University, Jan Śniadecki – can also be read as a warning against entrusting our government to enlightened technocrats, and as a call to trust the hearts of the people:

*Martwe znasz prawdy, nieznanie dla ludu;  
Widzisz świat w proszku, w każdej gwiazd iskiecie,  
Nie znasz prawd żywych, nie obaczysz cudu!  
Miej serce i patrzaj w serce!*<sup>7</sup>

The centre of Europe twenty-six kilometres north of Vilnius – that's what Mickiewicz would have called a dead truth. The solidarity of millions of people, linking hands for freedom – that should be the heart of Europe.

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<sup>7</sup> 'You understand dead truths beyond the wit of common folk;/ You can see the world in a grain of powder, in every spark of the heavens./ But living truths escape you; you do not see the miracle./ So take courage, and look into people's hearts!'; trans. Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p. vi.