

MULTICULTURALISM IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES: A LESSON FOR THE BALTICS?

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The article reviews current debate on multiculturalism and political correctness in American universities and attempts to evaluate its meaning and possible impact in the Baltic states. A view is expressed that it is important for the Baltics not to repeat the Soviet (and American) example of trying to integrate everybody into a titular local culture in order to avoid repeating the Soviet failure, or running into American idiosyncrasies with unknown political consequences.

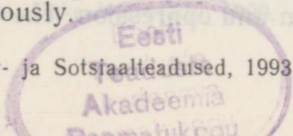
Europeans have always had good reasons to think that the United States of America is an extension of Europe, at least spiritually. It is mainly because the white population of that country has roots in Europe, which means that their culture has a European background as well. Thanks to its economic and military power, cultural, technological, and scientific innovations the United States has become the stronghold of the West, and that is what it is considered to be by the other parts of the world.

It might be a surprise to those who regard the US as a symbol of the West that influential intellectual trends are emerging in that country today which challenge the western cultural tradition as such, labelling it racist, sexist, and oppressive, seeking to radically reevaluate the history of the country, and reform the curricula of high schools and colleges accordingly. American universities and academic community at large are the main actors in the ensuing debate. The key words of the debate are "multiculturalism" (MC), that has replaced and radically changed the former popular notion of the "melting pot", and "politically correct" (PC) — a special discourse instead of the freedom of expression.

This article attempts to outline and evaluate some aspects of the ongoing cultural and political debate on American campuses from general and our regional perspective. The authors spent a few months at different American universities early in 1991 which provided them with personal insights and enabled them to discuss relevant issues with academics and faculty members on the spot.

LITERARY REVISIONISM AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Among different fields of scholarship that have been exposed to uncompromised revisionism in the US during the last decades literary criticism seems to stand out most conspicuously.



Traditionally, literary criticism has been approaching the notion of literary excellence as a matter of assumed standards of judgement, based on the notion of the supposedly objective criteria for aesthetic evaluation and of inherent textual meaning. Its followers believed that if a work survives the scrutiny of serious minds over generations it is a true classic and its reputation is protected: time destroys the worst and leaves the best, and time will do this, apparently, without any help from literary critics. Therefore the function of literary criticism was to illuminate the work, not to interpret it.

In the sphere of education this position has led to certain traditional assumptions as to the daily practices of English departments (reflected in the courses, syllabi, tests, degree requirements, and hiring policies): that such departments have a clear, basically curatorial (not socially conscious) mission; that this mission centers on certain widely taught works of belles-lettres, readily divisible by periods and genres, and that people with traditional Ph.D.'s have the clearest view of this Grand Canon.

However, the 1980s witnessed various new developments in literary theory and related fields that have produced quite radical changes in the discipline of literary studies, involving a thoroughgoing sceptical scrutiny of some of its most characteristic practices, objectives, and claims.

Much of the modern literary criticism, starting from the middle of this century (such schools as formalism, hermeneutics, semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalytic criticism, Marxism, deconstructionism), are based on the denial of inherent textual meaning and unite in general effort to hand over semantic authority to an interpreter. The followers of the modern schools of criticism have explicitly or implicitly proclaimed their emancipation from their bondage as servants of texts and have demanded a primary status for their own discourse. Not only has the traditional project of determining any presumptive defining properties of literature been abandoned, but the contents, structure, and orthodox justifications of the traditional literary canon—that is, the academy's own collection of privileged texts under that label—have been decisively unsettled. These critics have addressed the socio-political factors involved, they believed, in the initial establishment of literary reputations and in the present evaluation of past writers. The very nature of the literary text as an isolatable or aesthetic object has been seriously brought into question.

In self-conscious opposition to circumscribed formalist and post-structuralist modes of inquiry, American academic leftist critics were determined to situate aesthetic phenomena and artifacts in relation to both social foundations and other cultural works. This project required not only textual analysis, but also investigations into the economic, political, social, institutional, and historical grounds of cultural production, distribution, and consumption. Accordingly, totalizing modes of examination and wide-ranging programs of cultural studies were increasingly advocated.

Interdisciplinarity that has long been a familiar word in discussions of education and pedagogy, acquired a new force and urgency, as it appeared as an agenda ensuing from the imperatives of left cultural theory.

As pointed out by Professor Stanley Fish of Duke University, one of the key figures in literary revisionism, when in the classical liberal paradigm, interdisciplinary studies seek only to transform the academy while maintaining the wall between it and the larger field of social action, the radical interdisciplinarity begins with the assumption that the political is always and already inside those precincts and that the line separating them from the arena of social agitation is itself politically drawn and must be erased if action within the academy is to be continuous with the larger struggle against exploitation and oppression. The epistemology that usually accom-

panies this radical vision is either deconstructive or psychoanalytic or a combination of the two, and in any of its forms its thesis is that meanings do not exist as such (that is, as freestanding and "natural" entities) but are produced. It follows, says Stanley Fish, that "rather than teach meanings we must undo the meanings offered to us by hidden ideological agendas, poking holes in the discursive fabric those agendas weave."¹

The classroom, states Jeffrey Peck, then becomes a productive rather than a reproductive environment. In the spirit of critical reflection meanings and values of traditional pedagogy can be scrutinized. The intersubjectivity of meaning can be exposed, and educational institutions, the classroom, the discipline, and the university can be seen to construct and condition knowledge. In this way literary study, as the study of textuality, reveals the epistemological structures that organize how we know, how our knowledge gets transmitted and accepted, and why and how students receive it.²

From the sixties through the eighties the scope of critical inquiry was dramatically expanded and the concept of literature significantly broadened. In the sixties, for instance, women's texts were incorporated into the curriculum, followed by popular culture and working class literature. Out of the critique of the canon many new programs and syllabi have been developed, familiar to the academy now as the curricular innovations of such minority-studies programs as Women's Studies or Afro-American studies. By the early eighties, the leftist project of redefining literature and reconceptualizing criticism took on the broadly accepted nickname *cultural studies*.

The new graduate program in literature introduced in Duke University a few years ago is a perfect example of the new conception of literary/cultural studies. Professor Frederic Jameson, the Chairman of the Program, a Marxist literary theorist, sees the new scholarship as consistent with his mission "to create a Marxist culture in this country, to make Marxism an unavoidable presence in American social, cultural and intellectual life, in short to form a Marxist intelligentsia for the struggles of the future".³ The Program, says Jameson, is dedicated to the understanding of cultural history and the reshaping of literary studies in the context of contemporary thought.

The introduction to the Program reads: "Given the immense social and geopolitical changes that have occurred in the last few decades affecting the organization of the traditional disciplines, altering the status of the arts in Western cultures, and challenging Western aesthetic values by global concerns, what we have traditionally called "literature" is no longer a stable concept. The Literature Program acknowledges the challenges posed by the emergence of non-Western literatures and also by the increasing importance of non-canonical, "marginal" or oppositional cultures within the West. The liveliest theories or approaches today—feminism, Marxism, discourse analysis, the stress on reader-response and interpretive communities, the analysis of power and the focus on the social function of ritual and symbolic action—have in large part arisen in opposition to perceived exclusions in traditional literary studies, or to their isolation from other kinds of thought and action."⁴ The Program is therefore dedicated to the understanding of cultural history and the reshaping of literary studies in the context of contemporary thought and is aimed at

¹ Fish, S. Being interdisciplinary is so very hard to do. — Profession 89. Modern Language Association, New York, 1989, 15—22.

² Peck, J. Advanced literary study as cultural study: A redefinition of the discipline. — Profession 85. Modern Language Association, New York, 1985, 51.

³ D'Souza, D. Illiberal education. — The Atlantic Monthly, 1991, 267, 3, 76.

⁴ The Graduate Program in Literature. Duke University, 1990.

encouraging students "to explore the connections between literary study and innovations in other disciplines—anthropology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, sociology, law—which already share some of literature's investment in narrativity, structure, communication and interpretation" and to reincorporate their findings into literary discipline.

A Duke catalogue from 1960–1961 describes English-department courses on composition, persuasive speaking and argumentation, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and American literature from 1800 to 1920. The courses offered for fall 1991 include topics like "Love, Marriage and Adultery in the 19th Century Novel", "Women in Arab Literature", "Biological Issues in Cultural Theory", "Literature and Ideology: Literature of German Democratic Republic", or "Third World and Postcolonial Fiction".

The Program obviously answers the demands of modern multicultural education, that is, schooling which recognizes the internal multiplicity of American culture.

THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is a radical opposition to the *melting-pot* ideology of the previous years, which was based on the assumption that whatever cultural, racial or ethnic differences American citizens bore, they were all contributing to the amalgam called the American character, the American culture, the American way of life.

As Fred Siegel explains in his article "The Cult of Multiculturalism", the multiculturalists begin with a very different premise that it is important to recognize and to celebrate the wide range of cultures that cohabit in the United States.⁵ They argue that differences must be recognized, and that differences are legitimate. In its softer versions, multiculturalism represents the discovery on the part of minority groups that they can play a role in molding the larger culture even as they are molded by it. Debate on campus multiculturalism, defined as the need to recognize cultural variations among students, has tried with some success to talk about how a racially and ethnically diverse student body can enrich everyone's education. However, Siegel asserts that multiculturalism's hard-liners, who seem to make up the majority of the movement, damn as racist any attempt to draw the myriad of American groups into a common American culture. For these multiculturalists, differences are absolute, irreducible, intractable—occasions not for understanding but for separation. The American mixture of assimilation and traditional allegiance is denounced as a danger to racial and gender authenticity. This is an extraordinary reversal of the traditional liberal commitment to a "truth" that transcends parochialisms. The multiculturalists insist on seeing all perspectives as tainted by the perceiver's particular point of view. Impartial knowledge, they argue, is not possible, because ideas are simply the expression of individual identity, or of the unspoken but inescapable assumptions that are inscribed in a culture or a language. This threatens to leave no ground for anybody to stand on. To survive epistemologically, the multiculturalists make a leap and proceed to argue that there are some categories, such as race and gender, that do in fact embody an unmistakable knowledge of oppression. Victims are at least epistemologically lucky. Objectivity is a mask for oppression. Multiculturalists attack the standard conceptual distinctions between rational/irrational, white/black, healthy/sick, male/female, history/myth, literacy/illiteracy as hidden expressions of a hierarchy designed to "privilege" the first half of the paired categories. But there is an irony here, Siegel points out. What begins as an attempt to

⁵ Siegel, F. The cult of multiculturalism. — The New Republic, February 18, 1991, 34–40.

expand our mental horizons ends up by giving the second half of the pairing superior standing and a rightful claim to power. None of the reversals is as sad, as ridiculous, or as dangerous as the white/black reversal, wherein Herodotus and other ancient writers are combed for all references to North African persons and events, and the myth of the African origins of all civilization displaces the conventional history of the Greek origins of Western culture, claims Siegel.

According to Siegel, multiculturalism is a profoundly American phenomenon that owes a great deal to the changes in American intellectual life introduced in the 1960s. We are again witnessing the growth of campus radicalism. In the 1960s it postulated an all-powerful "Establishment" out to crush racial minorities, women, and the poor. Now the locus of the "Establishment" has changed. Today the villainy resides in the so-called canonical texts of Western civilization. The enemy is no longer a class but a whole tradition. It is no surprise then that the multiculturalists denounce the traditional single core curriculum composed of canonical texts of Western civilization, by such DWEMs (Dead White European Males) as Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, and others, that is widely forced upon students across the country with great harm to minorities.

The academic and cultural revolution on campus, explains Dinesh D'Souza in his article "Illiberal Education", is conducted in the name of those who suffer from the effects of race and gender discrimination in America, or from the effects of Western colonialism in the Third World.⁶ It is a revolution in behalf of minority victims. Its mission is to put an end to bigoted attitudes that permit perceived social injustice to continue, to rectify past and present inequities. But because the revolutionaries view xenophobia, racism, sexism, and other prejudices to be endemic and culturally sanctioned, their project seeks a fundamental restructuring of American society. It involves basic changes in the way economic rewards are distributed, and in the way cultural and political power is exercised.

"WHAT EVERY AMERICAN NEEDS TO KNOW"

Today most university presidents and deans cooperate with the project aimed at transforming liberal education in the name of minority victims. This group is said to include an overwhelming majority of the presidents of state universities and Ivy League schools.

However, the last few years have been marked by an escalation in the antirevisionist assault by conservative and liberal politicians, journalists, and scholars on the curriculum reform. In 1988 the National Association of Scholars was founded with the declared purpose "to redeem American higher education from intellectual and moral servitude to forces having little to do with the life of the mind or the transmission of knowledge". In a variety of newspaper articles the supporters of revisionism have been accused of writing "covert left-wing propaganda" instead of "traditional history", of satisfying "the partisan ideological assumptions of radical and minority groups", of compacting "the world's great literature to fit their coarse and ham-fisted political framework".

Clearly an anti-revisionist, D'Souza argues in his article that "the new critics go beyond the assertion of contingent knowledge to suggest that the very ideal of objectivity is a mirage, and that it is therefore perfectly legitimate for teachers to aside pretensions of impartiality and to impose their politically preferred ideas on students. When the traditional norms of scholarship no longer reign in the instinct for activism, licence is given for uninhibited ideological proselytizing."⁷

⁶ D'Souza, D. Illiberal education, 51-79.

⁷ Ibid., 76.

Here, a supporter of revisionism would point out that this line of argument ignores the leftist claim that the writing and teaching of traditional history—as well as of many other subjects, including literature—have often embodied covert right-wing propaganda, to which the leftists view their enterprise as an academically legitimate corrective. Argues Donald Lazere: “The Marxist theory of ideological hegemony holds that the political status quo is most effectively maintained through the unconscious assumption, permeating every aspect of culture, that the interests of those in power are those of society as a whole and are hence above partisanship. Thus leftists attempt to show that claims of non-partisanship in literature and scholarship, as well as in government and mass media, often are not only self-deluded but effective in delegitimizing views outside the ideological consensus. This attempt, however, gets stood on its head by conservatives . . . who claim that it is the leftists who are trying to impose their ideology to the exclusion of all others, rather than merely trying to counteract its exclusion and to point out the blind spots in the dominant ideology that impede objective, critical thinking about the status quo.”⁸ However, Lazere himself is cautious enough to further admit that “there are, to be sure, offensively dogmatic leftists; they unfortunately discredit the more responsible ones”.⁹

The main focus of the argument, though, has been on “the disappearance of a common curriculum in many of the nation’s colleges and universities, and the resulting failure of many students to acquire . . . even a rudimentary knowledge of the civilization of which they are both products and heirs”, as stated by the then secretary of education William J. Bennett.¹⁰

The right-wing academics warned that the extreme claims of minority groups “risk undermining any aspiration to common standards and a common culture, including a common ideal of justice, and without some semblance of a collective culture and of common ideals, we are left without a common basis from which to defend the claims of the individual against oppression”.¹¹

The most problematic task the supporters of “common culture” had to face was to define the contents of the category “common”. The first notable attempt was made by E. D. Hirsch. In his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* he has introduced the notion of a “national culture” and set up his argument for a uniform national school curriculum based on the list of terms and phrases, followed by “sets of associations” meant to equip every child in the country with a putatively finite, determinate, measurable store of basic “American knowledge”. By this he means the allegedly “common”, “traditional” information, attitudes and values shared by all literate Americans. “Fixing the vocabulary of a national culture is analogous to fixing a standard grammar, spelling and pronunciation”, explains Hirsch and claims that Americans “need to learn not just the associations of such words as to run, but also the associations of such terms as Teddy Roosevelt, DNA and Hamlet.”¹²

No doubt, this vision has been met with grave scepticism by the supporters of multicultural education. In her comment of Hirsch’s attempts Professor Barbara Smith of Duke University stressed the heterogeneous nature of the American society where “every citizen . . . belongs to numerous communities (regional, ethnic, religious, occupational etc.) and shares different sets of beliefs, interests, assumptions, attitudes and practices—

⁸ Lazere, D. *Literary revisionism, partisan politics, and the press*. — Profession 89. Modern Language Association, New York, 1989, 52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰ Bennett, W. J. *National Forum*. Summer, 1989, 3.

¹¹ Fox-Genovese, E. *National Forum*. Summer, 1989, 34.

¹² Hirsch, E. D. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Boston, 1987, 84.

and in that sense, cultures—with the other members of each of those communities”.¹³ She maintained that “there is...no single, comprehensive macroculture in which all or even most of the citizens of this nation actually participate, no numerically preponderant majority culture that, in Hirsch’s term, “transcends any or all other cultures.”¹⁴ Therefore, what Hirsch refers to as “national culture” and exemplifies by his list, ‘is nothing but a particular...set of items of “knowledge” that Hirsch himself privileges and that he wants the state educational system to make “standard”’.¹⁵

In Stanley Fish’s opinion, expressed to one of the authors, terms like “collective culture” and “common curriculum” suggest the specter of state control and the imposition of standards on the very individuals on whose behalf the establishment of the common is urged. The common, he maintained, is a political category; its content will vary with the varying perspectives of those who assert it. Therefore any institutionalization of the so-called common will be a political imposition.

As we see from this debate, those on the right confidently proclaim their (or “established”) common as everyone’s and then consign everything outside it to the wastebasket of the peripheral or inessential; they do not take difference seriously as an irreducible feature of perception and judgement, but assume that it can be non-controversially identified and left to the care of “grandparents, of neighbourhoods, and churches”. The left, on the other hand, take difference too seriously and end up denying it from the other direction, not by marginalizing it but by celebrating it. “Teach the conflicts”, calls Gerald Graff, by which he means structuring the curriculum around conflicts rather than concealing them in the folds of some desperate and doomed “unification program”.¹⁶

The question to be asked here is: does the introduction of new controversial names and approaches into curriculum guarantee tolerance, openness, and flexibility? The on-going heated and uncompromising debate in American campuses as well as the emergence of the expression *politically correct* have left the authors in some doubt as to the positive answer.

MC AND PC IN DAILY LIFE OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

Each fall some 13 million students, 2.5 million of them members of minority groups, enroll in American colleges. At university they hope to shape themselves as whole human beings, to prepare themselves for full and independent lives in the workplace, at home, and as citizens of a democratic society. But, as Dinesh D’Souza stresses, instead of liberal education many American students are getting its opposite: an education in closed-mindedness and intolerance.¹⁷ Many efforts seem to lead where nobody expected them to. Instead of integration one is getting segregation, instead of equal respect for different views one finds intolerance and hatred. Let us consider, as the most obvious example, the ideology of *Political Correctness* (PC), which designates various ways of imposing multiculturalism on campus. According to one American author, PC is fast becoming the unofficial ideology of universities across the country.¹⁸ PC has become so well known that it has made its appearance in the

¹³ Smith, B. Cult-lit: Hirsch, literacy, and the “national culture”. — The South Atlantic Quarterly, Duke University Press, 1988, 71.

¹⁴ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶ Graff, G. National Forum, Summer, 1989, 9.

¹⁷ D’Souza, D. Illiberal education, 79.

¹⁸ Judd, J. Political correctness: An insult to liberal philosophy and independent thought. — Duke Blue, 1990, 2, 3, 28.

official chronicle of American culture, the comic pages. The partisans of PC try to impose a new code of behavior and public speech upon academic communities. As Jerry B. Hough, a well-known political scientist from Duke University, explained to one of the authors, "PC" is an ironic description of certain left-wing views by liberally minded intellectuals. For that reason it is often put into inverted commas. PC focuses on issues of race, gender, age, and sexual preferences, or more exactly, how to communicate about these issues without insulting the people concerned. PC canon seeks to put people of different races, ages, genders, and sexual preferences on equal footing, first of all, in public discourse about them.

Newsweek comments on a college handout which lists 10 different kinds of oppression that can be inflicted by making judgments about people. These include "ageism—oppression of the young and old by young adults and the middleaged"; "heterosexism—oppression of those of sexual orientations other than heterosexual . . . this can take place by not acknowledging their existence"; "lookism . . . construction of a standard for beauty/attractiveness" (it is not sufficient to avoid discriminating against unattractive people, one must suppress the impulse to notice the difference); "ableism—oppression of the differently abled, by the temporarily able". "Differently abled" stands for "disabled" or "handicapped", this is a "term created to underline the concept that differently abled individuals are just that, not less or inferior in any way." The search for euphemisms has become an important element in PC. Lest anyone take offence at being called "old", he or she becomes a "non-traditional-age student". Nobody has seriously attempted to rename the sexes, however, there is a movement to change the way they are spelled: the PC spelling is "womyn", without the "men".¹⁹

In some colleges especial anti-racism seminars are taking place. As Jacob Weisberg reports from Oberlin college, Ohio, he participated in the session called "Fighting Oppression and Celebrating Diversity" of an anti-racism seminar sponsored by the dean's office.²⁰ The litany he constantly heard was: all whites are racist, and only they can be racist. Participants were instructed to "unlearn" not through efforts at color-blindness, but through heightened consciousness of race. To admit one's racism is a sign of strength and growth. According to "onion theory", propagated at the seminar, whites must continue to strip off layers of inherited racism through their whole lives. Throughout the seminar no white participant raised an objection. Weisberg explains that not all Oberlin students are brainwashed, but few want to go on record as opponents of the multicultural agenda.

Instead of the supposed tolerance the ideology of MC and PC seems to create a clear tendency towards fragmentation of the student body. The bases and conceptions of collective identity are becoming increasingly narrow. At Oberlin college, notes Jacob Weisberg, amid charges of racism and sexism, the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Union splintered into four narrow factions: Gay Men of Color, Zani (lesbians of color), Lesbians Be Loud (white lesbians), and the Gay Men's Rap Group (gay white men). Paradoxically, this process of Balkanization is also fuelled by the so-called affirmative action which was designed to facilitate integration at universities and in society at large and atone for the past injustice done to the people of color. Affirmative action is a policy instrument of universities that seek to achieve an ethnically diverse student body in order to prepare young people to live in an increasingly multiracial and multicultural

¹⁹ Adler, J., Starr, M., Chideya, F., Wright, L., Haac, L. Taking offence. — *Newsweek*, December 24, 1990, 48—54.

²⁰ Weisberg, J. Thin skins. — *The New Republic*, February 18, 1991, 22—24.

society. Diversity is usually pursued through "proportional representation", attempting to shape university classes to approximate the proportion of blacks, Hispanics, whites, Asian Americans, and other groups in the general population. But, as Dinesh D'Souza points out, the lofty goals of proportional representation are frustrated by the fact that different racial groups perform very differently on academic indicators, used at admission, such as grades and standardized test scores.²¹ Consequently, the only way for colleges to achieve ethnic proportionalism is to downplay merit criteria, and to accept students from typically underrepresented groups, such as blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians, over better-qualified students from among whites and Asian Americans. Each year state schools like Berkeley and the University of Virginia turn away hundreds of white and Asian American applicants with straight A's, while accepting students from underrepresented groups with poor to mediocre academic credentials. But this leads, in its turn, to extremely high dropout rate of affirmative action students. According to the data presented by D'Souza, at the University of California, Berkeley, 70 per cent of affirmative action students do not graduate. He maintains that this is reflective of national data as well.

The other side of the same coin is, as reported by Tamar Jacoby, that many academically successful black students seem ill at ease with their own achievement—as if it were somehow betrayal of their race.²² Several admitted that they had kept their high school grades secret in order to avoid charges that they were "selling out". Some students were also scared that mainstream success would somehow kill what was most authentically black within them.

The imperatives of "diversity" are not confined only to students. Today, preferential recruitment programs for black faculty are practiced at most universities. In 1988 Duke University announced a new affirmative-action policy requiring every department and program to hire at least one additional black by 1993 at the threat of administrative penalties. A number of universities have followed the same path and virtually joined an intense and open competition to lure black, Hispanic, and Native American professors to campus. But some universities have gone further. As Stephen R. Barnett reports, the University of California, Berkeley, not content with "numerical diversity", has announced a new goal of "true diversity".²³ This means matching professors' ethnic or gender identities with the fields in which they work: black teachers in African American history, Chicano faculty in Chicano literature, and, presumably, female professors in "women's" subjects. This thinking points toward a segregation of both scholars and academic fields. The true diversity concept is already felt by graduate students and faculty at Berkeley and nearby campuses. Nearly all minority doctoral students in Berkeley's English and history departments are specializing in their "own" ethnic topics. Many white students feel "warned off" ethnic fields by their minority peers.

The multicultural education leaves many important problems unresolved—such as how to avoid reducing nuances of culture to the determinants of race, or how to restrict the teaching of literature from becoming a mere pretext for advancing propaganda of any kind, or how to determine which works should have priority in the limited time available for most college courses and degree programs. But it is also clear that multicultural education is an inevitable attempt to find a specific way of dealing with the present-day situation of this very large and exceptionally diverse nation with its unique social, political, and ethnic history.

²¹ D'Souza, D. Sins of admission. — *The New Republic*, February 18, 1991, 30—33.

²² Jacobi, T. Psyched out. — *The New Republic*, February 18, 1991, 28—30.

²³ Barnett, S. R. Get back. — *The New Republic*, February 18, 1991, 24—26.

Viewed in a broader social and political context, MC highlights two points worth mentioning here. Firstly, Marxism seems to be assuming a new role by joining the miscellaneous group of anti-establishment forces. In the 19th and early 20th century the emphasis of Marxism was class-based and integrative—Proletarians of the world unite! However, this slogan worked only partially and in a number of countries led to heavy casualties. One of the main reasons for that was the fact that the proletarians got more integrated into the capitalist society than they were organized to fight against it. Marxism and relevant political organizations were gradually losing their social base—the working class. Probably better suited to work out revolutionary programs and to make anti-establishment claims on behalf of the oppressed than to do anything else, Marxism has now found women, non-whites, and other minorities to take care of. That is why its emphasis is now predominantly on gender, race, and ethnicity, aiming to free these target groups from the grip of capitalist integration. Anyway, today Marxists seem to be more successful at American universities than they have been among its working class.

Secondly, MC demonstrates that integration in society has its limits. When pushed too hard or failing to achieve its proclaimed objectives, integration falls apart, provoking disintegration. The “melting pot” is not working interracially. The affirmative action, no matter how mandatory, is failing to provide equal social status or psychological comfort for women, non-whites and other minorities. The outcome is frustration, which MC helps to rationalize and circumvent. Instead of playing the existential game on a common field by white male’s rules, the groups anticipating their eventual defeat claim that their own playground must be arranged and different rules established.

Here in Europe we may be standing at the threshold of our own multiculturalism as a possible response to the economic imperatives of European integration. Probably, it will be more inter-Western than anti-Western. The reluctance of smaller European nations to get more integrated is already being manifested at referendums and public opinion polls, the main concerns stemming from culture and agriculture.

To talk about MC during an armed conflict, like in the former Yugoslavia, makes, probably, little sense. But when we look into the roots of these conflicts, we can always see the differences of culture, language, let alone religion and ideology. Armed conflicts are the most extreme and destructive manifestations of these differences, easily occurring in an authoritarian and repressive political climate. After these conflicts are solved and armed fighting stops, cultural and other differences will remain as a challenge for the next generations. Can they find a peaceful way, or can they even enjoy the differences?

The states in Europe, traditionally nation states, are becoming increasingly multinational and multicultural under the imperatives of economic integration and large-scale migration. Their MC potential is accumulating accordingly. These changes have occurred, although induced largely by political reasons, also in the Baltic states. For instance, according to the census of 1989, representatives of 121 nationalities lived in Estonia.

Françoise Thom, a French political scientist, in her short commentary to the article by G. Sorman “PC Comes to Power in American Universities” states that MC has already come to Western Europe. For instance, the Arabs of France argue heatedly that everyone in France should be interested in Arab culture and history. She says that she respects Arab culture, but what can she do if, as a Frenchwoman, she is inclined to be

more interested in French culture. But, by so doing, she risks of being named "politically incorrect" and "racist".²⁴

Nevertheless, we would like to disagree with F. Thom when she states, in the same commentary, that PC and MC smell of internationalism and fraternity of nations, slogans commonly used under Communism. What was really going on under these slogans was imposition of the allegedly superior Soviet (pro Russian) culture. Given this, a revolt against such integration was unavoidable sooner or later.

Can the current cultural, religious, and ethnic issues in the former Soviet Union be understood and interpreted in the context of MC? Yes, they can, but only in a very limited sense—as a reaction to forced integration. While an overall atmosphere remains basically undemocratic, especially in the regions where this reaction, or post-Soviet MC, is most forcefully expressed, its manifestations are often too violent and lead to loss of lives. These regrettable developments happen largely because ambitious politicians overemphasize differences in historical experiences, language, cultural traditions, and, last but not least, in religion. All these differences are politicized to an unprecedented degree. They are, in fact, used to legitimize conflict. In some regions of the former Soviet Union there is no democratic discourse on these matters, no search for elements of peace and common interest. It might change in the future if democratic practices root in post-Socialist countries.

What could MC mean to the Baltics? These countries have experienced different cultural influences coming from the East and West. No matter how strong these influences were, the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians managed to preserve their cultural identity. At the same time they also acquired a cultural orientation towards Western Europe. Influences from the West, consisting of various innovations, were usually welcomed, while influences from the East, often supported by political coercion, caused irritation. In the USSR a deliberate policy of forced integration was implemented, obviously an imitation of the American "melting pot", part of the effort to "catch up" with the US. In the Baltics this evoked a counter-reaction that still manifests itself as a negative mass level attitude towards Russian language, culture, and even people.

At the same time Russian culture has very large groups of carriers and supporters in Estonia and Latvia. It will be also important in Lithuania together with Polish culture. However, the cultural identity of the Russians living in the Baltics is a complex phenomenon. Many of them have difficulties in identifying themselves with any particular culture. In Estonia, for example, they feel torn between Russian, Estonian, Soviet, and world cultures.²⁵ But whatever difficulties there might develop, it is clear that the Baltic Russians are in the process of creating an identity of their own, which would parallel to that of Baltic Germans, American Italians, etc. It looks highly improbable that they, as a community, would totally change their former identity, cultural aspirations, and become completely integrated with a quite different culture.

After the Baltic republics restored their national independence and were internationally recognized in 1991, demands to restore nation states and integrate minorities into respective titular cultures emerged, justified as attempts to save the Baltic peoples from being diluted with migrants and to safeguard national cultures. These attempts can be also understood as natural reactions to Soviet integration (pro Russification) policies.

²⁴ See her commentary in Lithuanian weekly *Siaures Atenai*, No. 35 (82), September 18, 1991.

²⁵ See Kirch, A., Kirch, M. and Tuisk, T. *The Non-Estonian Population Today and Tomorrow. A Sociological Overview*. Preprint, Tallinn, December 1992, 15–16.

However justified these demands might seem in their own right, they should be viewed with caution from the perspective of MC. One should not nurture hopes that different cultures could be easily matched, or some "common culture" created for minorities as a result of deliberate state action.

It is important that the Baltics do not repeat the Soviet (and American) example of trying to integrate everybody into a titular local culture. If they do, they will probably repeat the Soviet failure, or run into American idiosyncrasies with unknown political consequences. At the same time it should be possible for individuals to move freely among different cultures and enjoy the opportunities that cultural pluralism provides.

It has become popular nowadays to send young people from the Baltics over to American universities to obtain up-to-date Western education there. We hope that when they come back (at least some of them) after their studies, with hands-on experience of MC, they might be badly needed to see our cultural development here in a fresh perspective.

MULTIKULTUURILISUS AMEERIKA ÜLIKOOLIDES: ÕPPETUND BALTIKUMILE?

Priit JÄRVE, Kornelija JURGAI TIENE

On antud ülevaade Ameerika ülikoolides toimuvast diskussioonist multikultuurilisuse ja poliitilise korrektsuse küsimustes ning püütud hinnata selle tähendust ja võimalikku mõju Balti riikides. On peetud oluliseks, et Balti riigid ei kordaks Nõukogude Liidu (ja Ameerika Ühendriikide) püüdu integreerida kõiki kohalikku kultuuri. See võib anda soovimatuid poliitilisi tagajärgi.

МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНОСТЬ В АМЕРИКАНСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ: УРОК ДЛЯ ПРИБАЛТИКИ?

Прийт ЯРВЕ, Корнелия ЮРГАЙТИЕНЕ

В статье дается обзор проходящей в американских университетах дискуссии по вопросам мультикультурности и политической корректности. Высказывается точка зрения, что Прибалтийским государствам не следует повторять политику Советского Союза (и США) по интеграции всех в местную культуру. Это может привести к непредвиденным политическим последствиям.