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Lithuanian-Russian Relations in 1990- 1995

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Introduction

In 1988, the pressure of the Soviet totalitarian regime was lessening and Mikhail Gorbachev's reform initiative was gathering speed. In Lithuania, a national movement (*Sajudis*) was formed, which gained wide public support. In the beginning of 1990, *Sajudis*, with its programme of restoring an independent Lithuanian state, won the first democratic parliamentary elections in Lithuania. On March 11, 1990, the Lithuanian parliament - the Supreme Council - promulgated the Act on the Restoration of the Independent Lithuanian State. This was the beginning of the independent Republic of Lithuania, restored for the second time in history. Worldwide recognition of Lithuania as an international legal and political actor did not come immediately. However, from the very day of the Declaration of Independence, Lithuania's political leadership sought such recognition in all possible ways and pursued through all available means an independent foreign policy which expressed Lithuania's national interests. Relations with Russia were and remain to this day one of the most important interests. Despite the fact that today relations with Russia are not a top priority issue on Lithuania's foreign policy agenda, Russia nevertheless overshadowed the foreign policy debate due to the scores of problems it provoked.

1 Relations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation prior to the Dissolution of the Soviet Union

Current relations between Lithuania and Russia, both independent modern actors of international relations, were forged against a complex background of confrontation between Lithuania and the Soviet Union. After Lithuania's Supreme Council declared independence, the Soviet political leadership headed by Gorbachev resorted immediately to a wide range of methods pressuring Lithuania into revoking its declaration and returning to the jurisdiction of the Soviet constitution.

The first methods employed were legal and political pressure. The USSR constitution did envisage a possibility of secession from the Soviet Union. However, Gorbachev, who became President of the Soviet Union on March 14, 1990, presented to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies a draft law on the secession of republics from the Soviet Union which contained a very difficult and practically unimplementable procedure of secession. The Congress passed this law and, on March 15, adopted a resolution entitled *Concerning the Decisions of March 10-12, 1990 Adopted by the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR*. It pronounced the act declaring Lithuania's independence null and void and that the Lithuanian Supreme Council repeal said act. This meant that regardless of the decisions of the Lithuanian parliament, Lithuania was still considered part of the USSR and treated accordingly; negotiations on an equal footing were thus evaded.

Political pressure on Lithuania was accompanied by corresponding economic sanctions. When the Lithuanian Supreme Council refused to abide by the Soviet constitution, the President's decrees and resolutions of the Congress of People's Deputies, Moscow began an economic blockade against Lithuania (on April 18, 1990) by suspending deliveries of energy resources and raw materials to Lithuanian industry, transport, etc. Since the Lithuanian economy was closely linked to that of the Soviet Union as a whole, the shortage of raw materials led to the closing of some factories and there was an acute shortage of petroleum and other types of fuel and oil; in short, the Lithuanian economy began to falter. The size of newspapers was reduced by half because of the shortage of paper.

In addition to political and economic pressure, the instruments of propaganda were set to work and a true psychological war began against Lithuania. *Pravda* and other Soviet newspapers disseminated misinformation, central television reported distorted facts, and Lithuanian national minorities became targets of intimidation with the aim of provoking inter-ethnic conflicts. A special radio station *Tarybu Lietuva* (Soviet Lithuania) was set up in one of the military units stationed in Lithuania. The activities of the Soviet armed forces deployed in Lithuania intensified significantly. The troops were among the first to join the psychological war. Soviet military helicopters flew over Lithuanian cities, and tanks and armoured vehicles made the rounds. There were instances of open violence: on March 27, 1990, troops occupied the former headquarters of the Lithuanian Communist Party, and on April 20 they occupied the printing facilities of the Lithuanian Publishing House *Spauda*.

A wide range of pressure tactics was employed. However, during the first months following the declaration of independence, Gorbachev did not have enough courage to use openly the Soviet military force to disperse the democratically elected Lithuanian parliament and form a puppet government or introduce direct presidential rule from Moscow. For their part, the Lithuanian leaders held firmly to their position, although the consequences of the economic blockade and the pragmatic and moderate position of French President Francois Mitterand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, expressed in their April 18, 1990 letter to Vytautas Landsbergis,¹ compelled Lithuania to seek a compromise with Gorbachev.

Following the recommendation of the French and German leaders, the Lithuanian Supreme Council adopted a decision not to pass new political laws during the period of preliminary parliamentary consultations (if these should begin) until May 1, 1990². By another decision adopted on May 23, 1990, the Supreme Council obligated itself to suspend the functioning of those laws adopted after the Declaration of Independence which were related to matters defined as subjects of negotiations (e.g., the transfer of state border protection, the service of young men in the Soviet armed forces, the status of enterprises and institutions that had been under Moscow's direct jurisdiction, etc.).

1 See: Vytautas Landsbergis, *Laisves byla* (Vilnius, 1992). p. 78.

2 'Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos nutarimas "Del Lietuvos Respublikos ir Tarybu Socialistiniu Respubliku Sajungos santykiu pletojimo" in Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausios Tarybos ir Auksciausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo dokumentu rinkinys Nr. 1 (Vilnius, 1991), p. 120.

These decisions were based on the precondition that there would be negotiations on Lithuania's secession. Such a position by the Lithuanian authorities linked directly the suspension of the abovementioned laws with the start of negotiations³. However, Moscow ignored even these political allowances offered by the Lithuanian leadership. Nor did Moscow accept a joint position of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia expressed by their respective leaders during a visit in the beginning of June 1990. The economic blockade continued. The idea of a temporary moratorium on the Act of Restoration of Independence emerged only gradually, after regular meetings and consultations in Moscow conducted by the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene.

During the two-week debate at the Supreme Council and after the meeting that took place in Moscow on June 28, 1990 between Landsbergis, Prunskiene and the three deputies of the Supreme Council on one side and the Soviet leaders (Mikhail Gorbachev, Anatoly Lukyanov and Alexander Yakovlev) on the other, it became obvious that a moratorium on the Act of Independence was inevitable. Despite some very radical opinions and lengthy debates, on June 29, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania adopted a resolution recommended by President Landsbergis to declare a one-hundred-day moratorium on the Act on the Restoration of the Independent Lithuanian State of March 11, 1990 and to start inter-state negotiations at the same time⁴. In turn, on July 2, the Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, Nikolai Ryzhkov, declared that there was an order to lift all the economic restrictions imposed on Lithuania. It seemed that some kind of respite was achieved due to Lithuania's concessions and the acquiescence of the West - the economic blockade on Lithuania was lifted.

However, this change in the Soviet position and a hint of a possibility of a compromise should be attributed not so much to the moratorium on the Lithuanian Independence Act as to the growing intensity of the political struggle within the Soviet Union, i.e. between the political leaderships of the USSR and the Russian Federation for the revision of the powers of the central authority. The Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation that commenced its work in May 1990 passed a Declaration of Sovereignty in June and elected Boris Yeltsin, a popular politician and Gorbachev's opponent, as its Chairman. Seeking to implement the Declaration on Sovereignty, the new Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet desired to weaken the central authority of the USSR. Naturally, these aspirations coincided with Lithuania's interests. Lithuania expected and indeed received critical political assistance from the new leadership of the Russian Federation. The Russian parliament criticised the Soviet political leadership for the economic blockade imposed on Lithuania. This also contributed partially to the lifting of the blockade and the decision to start negotiations with Lithuania.

This was the time when the first contacts were made between Lithuania and the Russian Federation as independent and sovereign actors of international relations.

3 'Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos nutarimas (1990 m. geguzes 23 d. Nr. I-226)' in in Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos ir Auksciausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo dokumentu rinkinys Nr. 1 (Vilnius, 1991), p. 148.

4 'Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos pareiskimas (1990 m. birzelio 29 d.)' in Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos ir Auksciausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo dokumentu rinkinys Nr. 1 (Vilnius, 1991), p. 392.

Similar interests brought Lithuania and Russia to an immediate understanding. The deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation who visited Lithuania on July 12, 1990 maintained that Russia, "regardless of the procedure of the preparation of a treaty with the Soviet Union, [would] conclude a treaty of its own with the Republic of Lithuania"⁵. The Russian side promised that relations with Lithuania would be based on independence, equality, good-neighbourly relations and mutually beneficial co-operation. In Jurmala, on July 27, 1990, the first unofficial summit was held, i.e. a meeting between the Chairmen of the Supreme Councils of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and the Chairman of the Parliament of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin. At the summit, it was decided to begin the preparation of bilateral inter-state treaties between each of the three Baltic Republics and the Russian Federation⁶. In Moscow, on August 3, Prunskiene met with Ivan Silayev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation, and there were preparatory discussions between the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and other leaders of the Russian Federation. This was followed by a visit of the government delegation of the Russian Federation (led by Silayev) in Vilnius on August 15, during which both Governments signed an agreement on trade and economic relations for the year 1991. Both parties also agreed that it was expedient to start negotiations and prepare a treaty on long-term economic and cultural co-operation.

Meanwhile, in Lithuania's policy towards the Soviet Union, signs of two different political trends were becoming more discernible: that of the Supreme Council and that of the Council of Ministers, or of Landsbergis and Prunskiene, respectively. Immediately after the economic blockade was lifted by a Gorbachev decree on July 9, 1990, a USSR state delegation for negotiations with Lithuania was formed. At that time the Lithuanian Supreme Council appointed only a commission (the delegation would be formed later) to elaborate the main principles of the forthcoming negotiations. Only on August 21, 1990 was a group of eight people formed to conduct negotiations with Moscow⁷, although it did not commence its work until later. The reason was not so much the interpretation of the ambiguous formula of Lithuania's legal status in the negotiations process, or the process of sharing the spheres of competence between the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers; rather, it resulted from fundamental political disagreements. The two trends in Lithuania's 'political cooking pot' mentioned above were becoming increasingly more distinct. The first one was represented by Prunskiene and her Cabinet. This group urged a quick start to negotiations in order to achieve Lithuania's goals as soon as possible because of the favourable political situation in Moscow in July-August, 1990⁸. The second trend was advocated by a radical parliamentary group led by Virgilijus Cepaitis⁹. They were

5 'Istorine tiesa ir istorinis teisingumas', Lietuvos aidas, 1990 m. liepos 13 d.

6 'Sutartis su Rusija! Pranesimas apie Lietuvos Respublikos, Estijos Respublikos, Latvijos Respublikos ir Rusijos Tarybu Federacines Socialistines Respublikos Auksciausiuju Tarybu Pirmininku susitikima', Lietuvos aidas, 1990 m. liepos 31 d.

7 'Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos nutarimas "Del Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybines delegacijos nariu patvirtinimo" in Lietuvos Respublikos Auksciausiosios Tarybos ir Auksciausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo dokumentu rinkinys Nr. 1 (Vilnius, 1991), p. 324.

8 See: Kazimiera Prunskiene, 'Nenueitas kelias', Politika, 1991, Nr. 18. p. 31

9 See: Virgilijus Cepaitis, 'Ar mums reikalingos derybos su Maskva?', Lietuvos aidas, 1990 m. geguzes 25 d.

supported by the *Sajudis* deputies of the Supreme Council and were favourably viewed by the President of the Supreme Council, Landsbergis. This group was more in favour of a procedural delay in the negotiations with the Soviet Union, expecting to take advantage of the disagreements between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation that were already clearly visible. The latter position triumphed, nullifying almost all of the work done by Prunskiene regarding relations with the Soviet Union in the spring and summer of 1990.

In autumn the situation in Moscow changed. Gorbachev and Yeltsin agreed on the preparation of a common concept of a future union market; the pressure of the Communist nomenclature on Gorbachev was mounting, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union temporarily gained strength. These developments frustrated the expectations of the majority of the Lithuanian Supreme Council and its leader Landsbergis, who hoped for negotiations with only the Russian Federation and expected to "bypass" altogether the political leadership of the Soviet Union. Having strengthened his position, Gorbachev became disinclined to negotiate with Lithuania on its independence and instead insisted on a federation with the Soviet Union as the only possibility. The change of situation was clearly evident during the first official meetings between the Lithuanian and Soviet delegations for negotiations, which finally took place in October 1990 (!) - they merely revealed a total discord between the positions of the two parties. At the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991, circumstances became extremely complicated. Under Moscow's co-ordination, the Lithuanian pro-Communists and the occupation forces began to prepare a military coup in order to disband by force the disobedient Lithuanian parliament led by Landsbergis and resolve Lithuania's "problem of independence". The outburst of the Russian-speaking factory workers near the Supreme Council on January 8, 1991 and the resignation of Prunskiene's Cabinet served as a long-awaited pretext for the pro-Communist forces and a signal to start a direct takeover of power. The outcome of this act of state terrorism was the bloody events of the night of January 13 when Soviet military units used force and killed peaceful unarmed civilians who were keeping vigil over the Lithuanian television facilities.

Again Lithuania received support from the Russian Federation. On January 13, 1990, at the height of the events in Vilnius, Yeltsin arrived in Tallinn. Together with the Chairmen of the Supreme Councils of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (Landsbergis could not leave Vilnius on January 13 and he sent his signature by fax), he signed a joint declaration of the Supreme Council Chairmen of the four states on the situation in the Baltic countries. Furthermore, a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations was signed, requesting that an international conference under UN auspices be convened immediately to seek a solution to the problem of the Baltic states¹⁰. This was an eloquent enough gesture demonstrating Russia's approval and support of the aspirations of the Baltic states. On the other hand, this was a disgrace to the leadership of the Soviet Union and President Gorbachev.

The pro-Communist forces and the Soviet armed forces failed to carry out a *coup d'état* in Lithuania on January 12-13, 1991, but the Soviet Union did not relax its pressure. After the failed January coup in Vilnius, the Kremlin persistently held to the

10 See: Sigitas Kudarauskas, 'Sausio 13: Vilnius - Talinas', Lietuvos aidas, 1995 m. sausio 12 d.

same position towards Lithuania. The meeting that took place with the Soviet negotiating delegation in the beginning of April confirmed that the Soviet Union did not intend to enter into negotiations. The Soviet delegation did not have a mandate to conduct inter-state negotiations, including those on Lithuania's independence. The Soviet Union linked negotiations only to the division of competence in the future new union. Hence, when preparing a new union treaty, attempts were repeatedly made to incorporate Lithuania and the other Baltic states into the empire. The troops continued to terrorise the population and persecute Lithuanian citizens who deserted the Soviet armed forces. Soldiers were joined by the OMON - a special-purpose paramilitary police force, popularly known under the name of "black berets". There were a number of assaults on important Lithuanian facilities, border posts and custom-houses. On June 26, 1991, the Vilnius telephone and telegraph centre was seized, and on July 31, immediately after Lithuania signed the treaty with the Russian Federation, the Soviet special services assassinated several Lithuanian government officials at the Lithuanian Medininkai border post (on the Lithuania-Belarus border). Seven officers were brutally murdered by point-blank shots in the head and one was critically wounded.

Thus the relations with the Soviet leadership, which still held the main levers of power and controlled the economy, the armed forces and the secret police, remained very complicated. For its part, the Lithuanian political leadership and especially Landsbergis also pursued a policy of intense confrontation in relations with the Soviet Union. Such a course of events was partly predetermined by the fact that as early as January 1991, when the government changed and a group of more radically inclined right-wing politicians came to power, the entire process of foreign policy implementation was transferred to the jurisdiction of the leadership of the Supreme Council, namely Landsbergis. Certainly this did not mean that the Government led by Gediminas Vagnorius was removed from these matters. However, the functions of the Foreign Affairs Ministry were reduced considerably and limited merely to attending to the needs of the Supreme Council in implementing political decisions and to its activities in the international arena.

Another factor that was decisive in the Lithuanian policy of fierce confrontation with the Soviet Union was the lack of clarity concerning the internal Soviet situation and the political confrontation between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, which continued with increasing force. In June 1991 Yeltsin won direct presidential elections in the Russian Federation and received a mandate of power directly from the people, while Gorbachev's presidential mandate was supported only by the decision of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. Russia's government, which sought to reform the Soviet Union in its own way and obtain more power, continued the policy of friendly relations with the other republics. Therefore, despite the growing confrontation with the Soviet leadership, Russia was determined to sign a political inter-state treaty with Lithuania.

The course of negotiations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation was far from smooth, because the Russian delegation avoided an explicit formulation of its position with respect to 1940 for fear of provoking the anger of the reactionary deputies in the Russian parliament and the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. Nevertheless, the

new treaty between Russia and Lithuania on the basis for inter-state relations was prepared and solemnly signed in Moscow on July 29, 1991. After its ratification the treaty was to be in force for ten years with an automatic renewal for the same term, with the exception of Article 1, which was to be valid indefinitely. In this Article both parties recognised each other's state sovereignty and agreed to consider each other subjects of international law. The preamble of the treaty contained a recognition of the 1940 annexation of Lithuania and expressed hope that the elimination of the consequences of the annexation would increase mutual trust in the relations between the Russian Federation and Lithuania. The treaty was signed by the President of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, Landsbergis, and the President of the Russian Federation, Yeltsin. On the same day, an agreement was signed on co-operation between Russian and Lithuania in the Kaliningrad district of the Russian Federation. The Agreement was signed by the Prime Ministers of both states, Vagnorius and Silayev.

The signing of the political treaty with Russia was a great achievement in Lithuania's foreign policy. Lithuanian politicians, led by Landsbergis, managed to utilise with great success the disagreements between Yeltsin and Gorbachev and ensure that Russia, the principal republic of the Soviet Union, recognised and supported Lithuania's sovereignty. In fact, Lithuania received political recognition from one of the largest countries in the world. At that time Russia was simply the main republic of the Soviet Union, but its position was nonetheless too important to be totally ignored by Gorbachev. By the end of the summer of 1991, not only were Lithuania's relations with the Soviet Union politically obscure, but so was the situation inside the Soviet Union itself. This state of affairs was brought to an end by the unsuccessful coup instigated by reactionary forces in Moscow on August 19-21, 1991. The victory of the Russian democrats brought about the dissolution of the totalitarian Soviet Union and created a qualitatively new situation in the history of international relations in Eastern Europe. The real political power was now in the hands of the Russian Government, which had already committed itself to respect Lithuania's independence. Therefore, between August and September 1991 other large Western powers, as well as the USSR State Council (which still existed at this point), confirmed their recognition *de jure* of the restored Republic of Lithuania without much debate.

To sum up Lithuanian-Russian relations during the period between March 1990 and December 1991, when the Soviet Union finally collapsed, it can be said that this was a unique phenomenon, a truly exceptional period in the relations of these states. There can be many explanations of *what the Soviet Union was in principle*. However, whether we consider it a voluntary union of nations, as Soviet propaganda insisted, or a new form of the Russian empire created by Lenin and Stalin, we cannot neglect the fact that Russia has always been at the heart of this political unit, its material and ideological centre, and that essentially it was a state created and ruled by the Russians. Therefore, it is natural that in 1945-1990 Lithuania's relations with Russia were in fact relations with the Soviet Union - these were the relations between an occupier and an enslaved country. Between March 1990 and August 1991 there was a major change in

Lithuania's relations with the Soviet Union/Russia. The *perestroika* initiated by Gorbachev affected not only the ethnic outskirts, but also had a democratising effect on Russia - the heart of the empire. The new political elite of the Russian Federation resolved to seek broader independence and sovereignty, oppose totalitarianism and dictatorship and nurture democratic values in their own country. The aspirations of Russia's political elite were not as radical as those of Lithuania; nevertheless, they had a considerable impact on Lithuania's foreign policy decisions.

From the very start, these new developments in Russia were interpreted differently in various Lithuanian political circles and in the process of formulation of foreign policy. The advocates of *Realpolitik* maintained that it was necessary to take reality into account and seek a *modus vivendi* with, first and foremost, the political leadership of the Soviet Union. Their reasoning was that, on the one hand, this leadership controlled both the main power structures and the entire Soviet economy, which was still managed according to command economy principles. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union itself democratic reforms were underway and in the long term they were expected to create the preconditions necessary for Lithuania to realise its sovereignty. There was another political group that promoted the so-called "moral" politics, the politics of "national liberation", of appeal to international public opinion and maximum internationalisation of the Lithuanian question. This group of politicians viewed the Soviet Union as a static entity, an "empire of evil" incapable of reforming itself. Therefore, they believed that there could be no compromises and concessions and that Lithuania had to pursue a policy with a view to the Soviet Union's eventual dissolution.

These two factions' evaluations of Lithuania's relations with the Russian Federation depended on their respective attitudes towards the Soviet Union. The first group regarded the development of relations with the Russian Federation as an important but not decisive element in resolving relations between Lithuania and the Soviet Union. The second group clearly qualified relations with the Russian Federation as a top priority and proposed to delay negotiations with the USSR or ignore them altogether. During the first years after the Declaration of Independence, and particularly with the imposition of the economic blockade, the Lithuanian political leadership decided to make concessions and seek a compromise with the Soviet Union. Even a moratorium on the Act of Independence was declared in the interest of dealing with Gorbachev. However, subsequent events showed that by the end of 1990 the advocates of "moral" politics had the upper hand in the formulation of foreign policy. After the resignation of Prunskiene and her Cabinet, this group took over the foreign policy arena and concentrated its attention primarily on the development of relations with the Russian Federation while preserving a policy of confrontation towards the Soviet Union.

Historically, the "moral" position proved entirely justifiable and the desired goals, those of Lithuania's diplomatic recognition and political independence *de facto*, were achieved quite rapidly. This was also facilitated, of course, by a lucky coincidence of events. It is difficult to tell what Lithuania's fate would have been if not for the failure of the anti-democratic coup in Moscow in August 1991. This is of no importance today, because on December 26, 1991, after the final liquidation of the Soviet Union, the highly controversial Lithuanian dilemma of choosing between Russia and the Soviet

Union vanished completely. It is clear, though, that Russia did not disappear with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and that the problems pertaining to the heritage of the Soviet Union did not vanish either.

2 The Ins and Outs of the Withdrawal of Russian Troops from Lithuania

Starting at the end of 1991 Lithuanian-Russian relations began developing on a wholly new legal basis. Lithuania became an independent state *de facto* and *de jure*. Russia, which had been a constituent part of the Soviet Union and its principal republic, was now also an independent state and the successor to all the obligations and rights of the USSR. Russia acquired all the attributes of a superpower: it had an arsenal of nuclear weapons under its jurisdiction, a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and other international obligations in the sphere of disarmament. Russia also took under its control the Soviet troops deployed in the Baltic states.

It was not only the legal form that changed in Lithuanian-Russian relations - the content of bilateral relations changed as well. While until this moment Russian politicians had tried to use the Baltic states in their competition with the Soviet Union, from this point on Russia faced problems and responsibilities of an entirely new sort in its relations with Lithuania and the other Baltic states. Therefore, it is only natural that Russia quickly readjusted its policy and shifted its priorities from regional issues to global strategy. Consequently, its attitude towards the Baltic states, including Lithuania, also changed. Very soon their significance and treatment in Russia's political plans were no longer what they had been before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Certainly, considering its earlier relations with the Baltic states, the new Russian state and its political leadership could not question the independence of these countries. To this day, Russia constantly emphasises through its politicians and diplomats that it recognises the independence of the Baltic states and that it has no evil intentions towards them. And yet, at the end of 1991 there were many possibilities available in choosing a *status quo* for mutual relations. In Lithuania and the other Baltic states there were still military troops under Russia's command; the economy of the new states was fully and completely integrated into the economic space of the former Soviet Union; in the Baltic states (and especially in Latvia and Estonia) there were many people of Russian nationality, who upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union suddenly found themselves living abroad. Thus, it is understandable that during this period, the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces and the regulation of economic relations on a new basis were the main problems in Lithuanian-Russian relations.

The President of the Lithuanian Supreme Council, who at the time controlled the key issues of foreign policy, focused all his attention on solving the problem of the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces (now under Russia's jurisdiction) from Lithuania. Even before the resignation of Prunskiene's Cabinet, "Landsbergis took

Lithuania's infant foreign policy out of the hands of the Cabinet of Ministers and brought it, through the Supreme Council, under his own purview as the chief executive officer of the parliament"¹¹. The second Government led by Vagnorius essentially did not interfere in the formation of foreign policy and confined itself to international economic relations and the implementation of the decisions of the Supreme Council. A Lithuanian political scientist, Alvydas Medalinskas, seems to have been right in saying that "the dual Lithuanian foreign policy ended with the resignation of Prime Minister Prunskiene. During the rule of either *Sajudis* or the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP), the other heads of government and the Foreign Affairs Minister implemented the policy formulated by the heads of state and never took their own initiative"¹². However, it should be noted that Vagnorius' Cabinet was in charge of economic relations with Russia.

When settling the problem of foreign troop withdrawal, Landsbergis used an approach similar to the one he used in solving the issue of Lithuania's diplomatic recognition prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, efforts were made to raise the question of withdrawal on the international level. In this respect Lithuania's achievements are indeed very impressive. It succeeded in mobilising international public opinion to such an extent that Russia itself had to admit that the withdrawal of its military forces from the Baltic states was its obligation not only to those states, but also to the entire international community. Lithuania, as a member of the principal international organisations, had much more extensive options than in 1990-1991. On September 17, 1991, in his very first speech delivered at Lithuania's accession to the United Nations, Landsbergis stated that Lithuania wished to expand the nuclear-free zones and zones of mutual confidence, and therefore demanded the withdrawal from its territory of all the foreign armed forces that were illegally deployed on it; he also stressed that Lithuania did not nurture any feelings of hostility or revenge towards any of its neighbours¹³.

The staunch and uncompromising Lithuanian attitude toward the withdrawal of the Russian troops in international forums bore fruit: it encouraged a constructive position on the part of the international community and drew the necessary attention to this urgent issue. In June and July 1992 there were several international conferences: a meeting of NATO foreign affairs ministers, the CSCE preparatory conference in Budapest and the G-7 summit in Munich. At all these conferences the Lithuanian demand received support. For example, at the G-7 summit, on July 8, 1992, Russia was urged to show initiative in announcing a timetable for the withdrawal of troops from the Baltic states. In addition, the West confirmed that it was interested in solving this problem by taking upon itself concrete financial commitments with regard to the redeployment of the withdrawn troops on Russian territory. During the same month, at the follow-up CSCE conference in Helsinki, paragraph 5 of the Political Declaration of the Final Act was also formulated in a way that was advantageous to the Baltic states. It said that the CSCE, adhering to the main principles of international law, urged its

11 Alfred Erich Senn, *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania*, (New York, 1995), p. 99.

12 Alvydas Medalinskas, 'Lietuvos uzsienio politika nuo Sajudzio iki LDDP', *Atgimimas*, 1995 m. sausio 10 d., Nr. 1.

13 See: 'Vytauto Landsbergio kalba Jungtinese Tautose', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1991 m. rugsejo 19 d..

members to conclude without delay bilateral treaties, including timetables, that would ensure a quick, orderly and full withdrawal of foreign troops from the Baltic states.

The resolution adopted at the 47th UN General Assembly on November 25, 1992 was yet another diplomatic achievement in rallying international pressure on Russia to withdraw its troops from Lithuania. The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by the Baltic states concerning the withdrawal of the troops of a foreign country. This resolution appeared immediately after Lithuania and Russia signed a timetable for withdrawal of the Russian troops on September 8, 1992. However, the Russian side disrupted the signing of the main political document. Russia hoped that this would leave open the possibility of interpreting the timetable as merely a technical document which would be invalid without the main political agreement. Despite the fact that the principal document remained unsigned, the timetable did acquire the status of an inter-state agreement, since it was registered with the United Nations. The importance of the signed document was reinforced by the abovementioned resolution of the UN General Assembly which recommended that Russia settle the issue of troop withdrawal with all the Baltic states. The resolution supported "the efforts of the CSCE member-states which sought the withdrawal of foreign armed forces deployed on the territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania without their consent, by peaceful means and through negotiations"¹⁴. At the plenary session, the Latvian Prime Minister, Ivars Godmanis, spoke on behalf of the Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were supported by the United Kingdom, which spoke on behalf of the European Community, the United States of America, Hungary, Denmark, which spoke on behalf of the Northern European countries, Canada, which also spoke on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, Moldova, Costa Rica, Rumania, Afghanistan, Croatia, and even the Russian Federation itself, which admitted that the withdrawal of its troops from the Baltic states was Russia's obligation to the international community. Certainly, the UN resolution was another momentous Lithuanian achievement in raising a primary political issue on the international level.

It is understandable that the second direction of Lithuanian foreign policy under the guidance of Landsbergis with regard to the withdrawal of the troops was maintaining direct contacts with the Russian side. Throughout 1992, the President of the Supreme Council, Landsbergis, was actively co-operating with the Russian President, Yeltsin (he made as many as three trips to Moscow), trying to use to the full the good personal relationship that had been established before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On January 17, 1992, during Landsbergis' first official visit to Moscow, all the issues that were urgent to Lithuania were discussed in a meeting with the President of the Russian Federation: the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania and problems of economic co-operation. Yeltsin, a supporter of Lithuania's independence, was awarded the Commemoration Medal of January the Thirteenth to commend his support of Lithuania during the 1991 January events in Vilnius. During the meeting, no withdrawal dates were mentioned; however, it was agreed that within a month experts of both countries were to prepare a plan of the troop withdrawal that would contain conditions and deadlines. Yeltsin also agreed to withdraw troops from Vilnius first.

¹⁴ 'Molotovo - Ribbentropo pakto laidojimas Jungtinese Tautose', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. lapkricio 27 d.

Despite the fact that Landsbergis succeeded in securing approval for the troop withdrawal from the top echelons of the Russian authorities, negotiations foundered at lower levels. Throughout the winter and spring of 1992, the Lithuanian-Russian negotiations either proceeded at a very slow speed, were left dormant for quite a long time, or were delayed by the Russian side and lacked constructiveness. On June 5, 1992, Landsbergis visited Moscow once again. In his meeting with Yeltsin it was observed that the agreements of January 17 were neither implemented nor reflected in negotiations. Landsbergis was trying to pit the supreme Russian political authority against the lower ranks of the Russian bureaucracy that adopted decisions at the practical level and thus to achieve the desired aims. And, indeed, the Russian President promised again to take the necessary measures to accelerate the process, to make it genuine and dynamic. According to Yeltsin, "the withdrawal [had] to begin and have its own timetable of action"¹⁵. The Russian President considered this a more important matter than the settlement of a final deadline. On the other hand, the Russian leadership constantly stressed that it was not possible to withdraw troops and materiel immediately. However, Lithuania's firm stance and a successful mobilisation of international opinion through the CSCE and other international fora produced positive results in the summer of 1992. In Moscow, on August 5, 1992, at the initiative of Russia itself, the three Baltic Foreign Affairs Ministers met with the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister, Andrei Kozyrev. This time it was Russia which presented its proposals concerning the troop withdrawal from the Baltic countries. The document, consisting of four items, expressed a rather strict Russian position: the first item spoke about the observance of the CSCE provisions of human rights and demanded changes in those laws that in Russia's opinion were discriminatory towards the Russian speakers in the Baltic states; the second item demanded explicit statements denouncing any territorial claims; the third item said that Russia was ready to withdraw its troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1994. Russia put forward quite a large number of preconditions: during the withdrawal period the troops must be provided with adequate conditions for normal functioning, the Baltic states should revoke their claims for damage sustained during 1940-1991, the Baltic states must participate in the construction of housing intended for the troops being withdrawn, the transit of military materiel to the Kaliningrad district must be guaranteed, changes in the structure of the armed forces, but not increase of numbers must be allowed, and similar preconditions. The fourth item stated that when settling property issues relating to Russian legal and natural persons all discriminatory measures should be abolished. Despite all this, the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministers demonstrated that Moscow was ready for negotiations and compromises¹⁶.

The meeting between both state delegations for negotiations took place in Vilnius, on August 11-12. In the beginning, there was a wide gap between the positions of the Russian and the Lithuanian delegations. The Russian side based its position on the comments made by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Kozyrev, at the meeting with the Baltic Foreign Affairs Ministers on August 5. According to the Lithuanian

15 'Is Kremliaus susitikimo - su optimistiniais pazadais', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. liepos 9 d.

16 See: Balys Bucelis, 'Keturiu saliu uzsienio reikalu ministru susitikimas Maskvoje', Tiesa, 1992 m. rugpjucio 7 d.

representatives, there were two points of departure: first, the referendum of June 14, 1992, at which the Lithuanian population demanded an immediate withdrawal of the armed forces of the former USSR and payment for damage; second, paragraph 15 of the Political Declaration of the Final Act adopted in Helsinki at the CSCE Summit immediately after the referendum, which called for a fast, orderly and complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the Baltic states. Despite key political disagreements, progress was reached on the timetable of the Russian troop withdrawal from Lithuania. Already before the CSCE Helsinki Summit, Lithuania had presented Russia with a draft timetable of the troop withdrawal. According to this timetable, the withdrawal was to be carried out in four months and completed by the end of 1992 as demanded by the Lithuanian citizens at the June 14 referendum. The draft timetable provided the opportunity to make negotiations more concrete and move from general discussions (i.e. that Russian officers need housing, transport, etc.) to concrete technical problems of the withdrawal. At the meeting the Russian delegation had to admit that the timetable proposed by Lithuania was neither unrealistic nor unjustified - it was unacceptable only because of technical and social problems of the withdrawing troops. The head of the Lithuanian delegation for negotiations and Vice-president of the Supreme Council, Česlovas Stankevičius, stated that there certain progress was achieved at the negotiations and added that the withdrawal deadlines proposed by both Lithuania and Russia were still to be negotiated. Thus, the negotiations continued, albeit with big differences between the positions of the two sides. According to a member of the delegation, Romualdas Ozolas, another achievement of negotiations was "the legal recognition of the issue of damage as a realistic problem which needed to be solved"¹⁷. Russia accepted it all except the size of damage indicated by the Lithuanian side.

Negotiations were resumed in Moscow, on September 6-7. The working groups led by the Vice-president of the Supreme Council, Stankevičius, and the National Defence Minister, Audrius Butkevičius, continued with the co-ordination of the draft treaty and the timetable for the Russian troop withdrawal. According to Stankevičius, the Lithuanian side did not manage to push through the desirable wording of all the articles. The Russian experts maintained that the words "annexation" and "occupation" had to be crossed out from the text of the treaty since they did not correspond to the current situation. At last, on September 8, even prior to the meeting in the Kremlin between the Lithuanian delegation led by Landsbergis and the Russian delegation led by Yeltsin, Butkevičius met with the Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev. The Lithuanian Minister said after the meetings that it was agreed that the first Russian soldiers would leave Lithuania as early as October, and the final withdrawal would be completed by August 31, 1993.

On September 8, 1992, an official delegation led by Landsbergis arrived in Moscow. According to Landsbergis, "this day could be a basis for a good novel. There were attempts to disrupt the signing and to conceal who was trying to do this"¹⁸. It seems that in Russia's political and bureaucratic circles it was decided in advance to frustrate

17 Romualdas Ozolas, 'Pirmosios derybų vaisių užuomazgos', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. rugpjūčio 18 d.

18 Manvydas Gostautas, Gintaras Miksiūnas, 'Dvejį metų po svetimos kariuomenės išvedimo: diazgasmas ir nerimas dėl nuostolių', Lietuvos aidas, 1995 m. rugpjūčio 31 d.

for the time being the signing of the treaty and thus to delay as much as possible the process of troop withdrawal. During the signing ceremony, President Yeltsin was brought unprepared documents (covered with crossed out words), although they had been fully co-ordinated by both delegations. Hence, it was decided not to sign the main political document on the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from Lithuania. Nevertheless, the other three documents were signed. Among them was the timetable of the troop withdrawal. It was signed by Butkevicius and Grachev. The Russian side probably hoped that it would be possible to treat the timetable only as a technical document which would not be valid without a political agreement. However, it was signed on behalf of the states and not ministries, and was registered with the United Nations as an international treaty.

Problems did not end with the signing of the timetable of the troop withdrawal. Very unexpectedly, that same autumn, on October 29, Yeltsin signed a decree to suspend the troop withdrawal from the Baltic states until the signing of inter-state agreements that would regulate deadlines, conditions and procedures of the troop withdrawal, social guarantees for the officers and members of their families, and compliance with international legal standards. The Russian President authorised the Government to prepare within three days provisional agreements with the Baltic states that would provide officers and members of their families with social guarantees, financial and alimentary assistance.

In October 1992, it seemed that Lithuania and Russia were about to fail to reach an agreement. However, once again, with the help of direct contacts between the heads of state, misunderstandings were settled. On November 2, Landsbergis sent a statement to the Office of the Russian President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The statement said that the President of the Supreme Council, having familiarised himself with Yeltsin's decree, was of the opinion that the three-day deadline for a conclusion of an unknown agreement sounded more like a pretext not only for the suspension of the withdrawal, but also of the implementation of the economic treaties. That same day, Yeltsin and Landsbergis had a telephone conversation. The Russian President underlined that the final deadline of the withdrawal was valid as agreed upon earlier, i.e. the summer of 1993. Yeltsin also said that the troop withdrawal was not suspended, only re-organised because of freezing weather conditions and housing problems of the withdrawing troops¹⁹. When commenting on Yeltsin's decree, the former adviser of the Russian Defence Minister, Yevstigneyev, stated that the document appeared with the aim of straining relations between Lithuania and Russia. According to Yevstigneyev, such efforts could be observed ever since the beginning of September. The expert also mentioned that in Moscow, on September 8, Yeltsin was given a completely different text - not the one that Landsbergis had. Yevstigneyev claimed that Yeltsin's decree on the suspension of the troop withdrawal from the Baltic

19 Terese Banceviciute, 'V. Landsbergio pokalbis su B. Jelcinu', Lietuvos aidas, 1993 m. lapkricio 4 d.

states was born at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that the Defence Ministry participated in the editing of the text²⁰.

In principle, the October misunderstandings were settled only because the efforts to strain Lithuanian-Russian relations encouraged by various Russian authorities were not reiterated at the highest level. These problems could also be explained by the fact that while Lithuania and the other Baltic states made every effort to raise the troop withdrawal issue to the international level, the Russian diplomatic corps did not waste time: all possible means were put into action to delay the solution of the problem, to win extra time and take advantage of all the disagreements that were emerging among Lithuanian politicians prior to the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

By the end of 1991, the number of members of parliament opposing Landsbergis and the entire leadership of the Supreme Council started to grow. The so-called "new majority" was emerging, united by the antagonism towards Landsbergis and Vagnorius. The President of the Supreme Council was reproached for antagonising Lithuanian political forces and exacerbating social tension. It should be noted that the main criticism of Landsbergis was directed at the internal campaign, which was becoming more like a "witch-hunt". The opposition also voiced some criticism of foreign policy and relations with Russia. It was believed that Landsbergis was too strict and unfriendly towards Russia, that he treated Russia as a hostile country and that all this had inevitable repercussions on Lithuanian-Russian economic relations.

The internal political struggle affected concrete Lithuanian foreign policy decisions with regard to Russia. In the spring of 1992, because of the opposition from the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Council, Landsbergis did not succeed in replacing the Lithuanian diplomatic representative in Moscow, Egidijus Bickauskas. And in general, according to Evaldas Nekrasas, a researcher of the formation mechanisms of the Lithuanian foreign policy, "the spring of 1992 was the time of the greatest influence of the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the Supreme Council and rank and file members of the Parliament in a foreign policy process in the modern history of Lithuania"²¹. Therefore, Landsbergis and his supporters in the Supreme Council and Sajudis decided to take firmer steps to neutralise the influence of the "new majority". A referendum on the introduction of the Office of President and on appropriate amendments of the Provisional Basic Law (the Constitution) was proposed. It was suggested that this referendum be held together with another one at which Lithuanian citizens would express their will with regard to the withdrawal of the Russian troops by the end of 1992 and the compensation for occupation damages. There was no doubt that, despite the unrealistic deadline of the troop withdrawal and the propagandist nature of the issues, they would nevertheless receive support from the Lithuanian citizens. As for the referendum on the introduction of the Office of President and the amendments to the Provisional Basic Law, its advocates were not so sure about their success. However, holding the two referenda on the same day was

20 See: Ramune Sakalauskaite, 'Ar viska zinojo B. Jelcinas, nepasirasydamas tarpvalstybinio susitarimo ir pasirasydamas potvarki, sustabdanti kariuomenes isvedima?', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. lapkricio 3 d.

21 Evaldas Nekrasas, *Legislature and Executive in Foreign Policy Making*, (Vilnius, 1994), p.12-13.

expected to bring success to both. Nevertheless, the opponents of Landsbergis achieved by a small margin in the parliament that the referenda be held on different days. In principle, the opposition's behaviour is fully understandable. Landsbergis was denied the possibility to use urgent foreign policy problems for his own benefit in internal political struggles and thus strengthen his position in the country. On the other hand, the opposition overestimated the importance of the referendum on the introduction of the Office of President and the amendments to the Provisional Basic Law. First, a new Constitution had to be drafted in any case; second, the referendum was to be held not in order to confirm Landsbergis as the President, but in order to decide whether such a post was needed in Lithuania in general. The end of this drama of internal politics is well known. On May 23, 1992 the "presidential" referendum was a total failure: it did not attract an adequate number of voters, and the proposed solution was not adopted. This was an enormous political defeat for Landsbergis and his supporters²². Meanwhile on June 14, 1992, the referendum on the troop withdrawal received overwhelming support: 80 per cent of citizens voted in favour, although the decision of the referendum was not implemented - foreign troops left Lithuania much later. This referendum was important only as a propaganda campaign - it helped mobilise international opinion and assisted negotiations with Russia.

In Lithuania, alongside the growing political confrontation and regrouping of political forces, an economic crisis was developing. The leadership of the Supreme Council concentrated all its efforts on internal political struggle and the troop withdrawal, and as a result gave too little attention to international economic relations, leaving this sphere at the disposal of Vagnorius's Government. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, one of the main criticisms of Vagnorius' Government by the "new majority" was the deterioration of Lithuania's economy. Certainly, just like the 1990 economic blockade was not Prunskiene's fault, the blame for the deterioration of the Lithuanian economy in the summer of 1992 fell not only on Vagnorius' Government. The economies of Lithuania and the other states that emerged in place of the Soviet Union were fully and completely integrated into the common economic space of the former Soviet Union. However, the huge Russian market, which in theory was able to absorb an enormous quantity of imports, in fact became inaccessible to Lithuanian producers. This could be accounted for not only by the newly created borders and other political problems, but also by the fact that Lithuania's economy was not reformed and it was unprepared to function on a new basis. The problem lay in full integration of Lithuania's economy into the Soviet economic space and in the crisis of the command economic management system. The process of transition to market relations began when Gorbachev was in power; however, there was still a long way to go. Among the major problems was the decay of the Soviet financial system: payments between economic subjects were disrupted, mutual indebtedness between suppliers and clients was colossal.

Regardless of the general economic crisis, Russia was in a position to exert great influence on Lithuania's politics through economic means. The Lithuanian Government could not ignore the reality; it had to realise that it remained fully economically

22 See: Ramune Sakalauskaite, et al., 'Geguzes 23-osios referendumas: atsitiko tai, ka galima buvo numanyti - treciojo Sajudzio kudiki Lietuva pagimde negyva', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. geguzes 25 d.

dependent on the supplies of key raw materials and energy resources from the former Soviet Union, and particularly from Russia. In July 1992, the Bank of Russia suspended payments to Lithuania because of the debts of the latter and reviewed conditions of bilateral economic co-operation. This amounted to the abolishment of the status of most-favoured nation and meant that from now on Lithuania was to pay for Russia's goods in hard currency at world prices. In Lithuania, economic relations were becoming increasingly complicated and degenerating at a fast pace. This could lead to the disruption of the whole economic reform process and allow the level of inflation to rise unrestrictedly (by the summer of 1992 it exceeded 2000 per cent); the standard of living was dropping at a disastrous rate. As a result of such a critical situation and the abovementioned regrouping of political forces within the Supreme Council, on July 14, 1992 a no-confidence vote was held concerning Vagnorius' Government. The Government of Aleksandras Abisala, which replaced Vagnorius' Cabinet on July 24, 1992, came into power in the atmosphere of general preparations for new parliamentary elections. The latter factor predetermined the priorities of the new government's programme of action. Speaking on Lithuania's policy towards the East, the new Prime Minister stressed the problem of troop withdrawal and spoke "in favour of closer co-operation in trade, transport, communications, etc"²³. During the implementation of these provisions, Lithuanian-Russian diplomatic contacts grew more intense, and not just in the sphere of troop withdrawal. In Moscow, on October 12, 1992, a meeting of the Lithuanian and Russian Prime Ministers was held and concrete economic agreements were signed.

For all that, the success of Lithuania and the other Baltic states in raising the problem of the Russian troop withdrawal to the international level on the one hand, and the unclear internal situation in Lithuania on the other were the reasons why Russia's position became more rigid in economic and trade relations. Russia tried to compensate for its diplomatic defeats in the international arena and to take advantage of the change of governments and the upcoming parliamentary election in Lithuania; it also tried to pose new conditions and demands in order to postpone the process of troop withdrawal. Therefore, the autumn and winter of 1992 were an especially difficult period for Lithuania's economy, which was deteriorating even further. Russia was exerting indirect economic pressure by breaching agreements on supplies of energy resources and by closing its market. This inflicted big losses on Lithuania's economy and deeply affected the living conditions of the Lithuanian population (disruptions of the hot water supply and heating of residential premises). This, in turn, predetermined the fall in popularity of Sajudis and its leader Landsbergis. Even the timetable of withdrawal of the Russian troops signed on September 8, 1992, and the fact that Russia was compelled to make a commitment to withdraw its troops by the end of the summer of 1993 did nothing to improve Landsbergis' position.

This was the time when the Seimas election campaign began. The reformed Lithuanian Communist Party, which was renamed the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP), was very well prepared for it. This party had dissociated itself from Communist ideology and declared its social-democratic orientation. During the years of

23 Rimgaudas Gelezevicius, 'Naujasis premjeras nusiteikes ryztingai. Aleksandro Abisalos spaudos konferencija', Tiesa, 1992 m. liepos 25 d.

Landsbergis' rule, this party managed to attract a significant number of democratic intellectuals from Sajudis (Jonas Kubilius, Bronius Genzelis, Albinas Lozuraitis, Algirdas Gričius and others) who did not approve of the confrontational posture of Landsbergis and the provocation of antagonism within the society. The party leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, and his supporters criticised Landsbergis and the then political leadership for an overly strict and straightforward position towards "democratic Russia". They continuously emphasised that the current Russia was not the Soviet Union and that it was not right to "tease or condemn it undeservedly". Brazauskas and his supporters maintained that policy towards Russia should remain one of principle and be pragmatic and more adaptive, and that it was necessary to abstain from political statements and declarations that did not bring any tangible benefits and were merely offensive²⁴. Landsbergis and his backers anticipated that pre-term parliamentary elections would allow him to get rid of the "new majority" that constrained his freedom of movement.

3 The LDLP in Power: the Continuation of the Ins and Outs of the Russian Troop Withdrawal

The Seimas (Parliament) elections that took place on October 25, 1992 brought an unexpected and overwhelming victory to the LDLP. It had been clear that the LDLP enjoyed sufficient popularity, but no forecasts or opinion polls predicted that it would receive an absolute majority in the Seimas. Such was the choice of the majority of the Lithuanian citizens. One should not forget that this choice was also the result of indirect economic pressure exerted by Russia. Russia failed to gain concessions from Lithuania during negotiations on the troop withdrawal; nevertheless, it was due to its indirect influence that those political forces came into power in Lithuania which had a more favourable and pragmatic attitude towards Russia. In this way, Russia expected easier terms for the fulfilment of its obligations.

Most foreign observers were totally unprepared for such a radical change, which was not quite understandable and could not be easily explained. Since the Declaration of March 11, 1990, in the eyes of the international community Landsbergis was something of a symbol of Lithuania's non-violent resistance to Moscow. Therefore, such a crushing defeat in the elections was truly unexpected. However, the reasons for the lack of Landsbergis' popularity should be looked for in his political style. A researcher of modern Lithuanian political history, Alfred Erich Senn, has noted that "Landsbergis's strength in fact lay in confrontation"²⁵. His confrontational posture indeed helped mobilise international opinion and win support for Lithuania's struggle for independence from Gorbachev's Soviet Union. These same tactics brought positive results in negotiations with Yeltsin's Russia on the timetable of troop withdrawal from Lithuania. Unfortunately, Landsbergis kept the same confrontational posture in internal

24 Algirdas Brazauskas, 'Lietuva vel prie nauju rinkimu slenkscio', Tiesa, 1992 m. rugpjucio 7 d.

25 Alfred Erich Senn, *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania*, (New York, 1995), p. 154.

politics: as head of parliament and the factual head of state, instead of promoting consensus and co-operation among all political forces, he yielded to anti-Communist rhetoric, forgetting the fact that Communist rule lasted not five years but fifty, and that practically each and every Lithuanian citizen could be accused of collaboration. Thus, according to Senn, "once independence was established and recognised... Landsbergis's position as a leader deteriorated quickly"²⁶.

The successful election results were put into practice and consolidated during a rather brief period by the Government of Prime Minister Bronislovas Lubys, appointed on December 31, 1992. The new Prime Minister, who was appointed till the Presidential elections set for February 14, 1993, pursued the course of the previous Government under Abisala. There were regular consultations with the Russian military leadership working out details of the conditions of withdrawal and military transit through Lithuania's territory; economic contacts with various Russian regions and the other CIS countries were expanded.

Lithuania's presidential elections on February 14, 1993 were won by the LDLP leader, Brazauskas. His victory completed the process of formation of the main institutions of power as envisaged in the new Constitution. The new Constitution was adopted on October 25, 1992 at a referendum that was held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections. According to this Constitution, primary international contacts and foreign policy became the prerogative of the President and the Government. The authority of the Parliament - its leadership and the Foreign Affairs Committee - was by far more limited in this sphere. The role of the President and his Office increased.

Thus, in the beginning of 1993, there was a change of the main decision-making personalities, as well as a redistribution of powers among the principal institutions. The main problems of Lithuania's relations with Russia were awaiting a solution. The Russian troops were still in Lithuania, and economic relations had to be finally settled. Having come into power, the LDLP hoped to find easy and simple solutions to the problems of relations with Russia. However, such expectations were unfounded. Russia was already harbouring new hopes that with a more pragmatic and favourably inclined political force in power, there was a possibility of larger concessions and privileges and the delay of the troop withdrawal. Therefore, Lithuanian-Russian relations experienced first complications soon after the elections.

The new political leadership immediately faced a rather strong and consistent Russian desire to realise its interests. Brazauskas had disarmed himself by insisting earlier that it was necessary to avoid confrontational propaganda and a much too frequent appeal to the international community, and hence he had to negotiate with Russia under less favourable external conditions. In the beginning of 1993 it was not yet clear who was to become the Lithuanian President (the LDLP leader, Brazauskas, who was elected Chairman of the Seimas, carried out the duties of the President only temporarily), but first signs appeared indicating that in negotiations with Lithuania Russia's position had changed in principle: Russians were eager to reject the agreements negotiated by both sides and to present Lithuania with new ultimatums.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 155.

At the press conference held on January 15, 1993 the head of the Lithuanian negotiating delegation, Stankevičius, confirmed the concern expressed in the delegation's statement which said that "Russia resumed its claims for real estate which [was] Lithuania's property, demanded that the Russian troops be allowed to sell it; the agreement on compensation for the forfeited armaments of the Lithuanian armed forces as well as the negotiated decisions on compensation for continuing environmental and other damage...changed; the Russian military corps was granted political and civil rights in Lithuania; the flats occupied by the withdrawing officers were transferred into their possession; and the officers of the withdrawing military units who were transferred to the reserve were allowed to remain in Lithuania and given the flats occupied by them or even new ones, etc"²⁷.

The growing pressure from Russia was evident from other facts. On March 15, 1993 the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister, Kozyrev, was in Vilnius on a brief visit. At first sight, this could be evaluated as a sign of Russian benevolence towards Lithuania, because at that time Kozyrev visited neither Latvia nor Estonia. On the other hand, in a discussion with the Lithuanian President, Brazauskas, the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister noted that Lithuania was trying to avoid the signing of agreements on the withdrawal of Russian troops and social guarantees for the officers. This supposedly prevented Russia from fulfilling its obligations concerning the troop withdrawal²⁸.

Apart from increasing its pressure on Lithuania, Russia began testing the reaction of the international community as to the possibility of the prolonged presence of Russian troops in the Baltic states. On March 29, 1993, at the meeting of NATO and Eastern European Defence Ministers in Brussels, the Russian Defence Minister, Grachev, announced that Russia was suspending the withdrawal of its troops from the Baltic states. The Minister explained this by social problems of the withdrawing Russian soldiers, especially the shortage of housing. Understandably, the representatives of the Baltic countries - Ministers of Foreign Affairs - issued a protest against such a statement. Their protest was supported and approved by the major Western states²⁹. Then the Russian politicians decided to desist temporarily from such straightforward pressure. The Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Sergei Stepashin, who visited Lithuania on April 6-8, confirmed on his own and President Yeltsin's behalf that the Russian troops would be withdrawn from Lithuania on time. And on May 18, during his official visit, the Russian Defence Minister himself said after his meeting with President Brazauskas that the deadline for the withdrawal of the Russian troops was August 31 and that Russia was going to comply with the timetable of the troop withdrawal from Lithuania signed on September 8, 1992³⁰.

27 'Lietuvos Valstybinės derybų su Rusija delegacijos pranešimas', *Atgimimas*, 1992 m. gruodžio 22 d., Nr. 50.

28 'Prezidentas dave sutikimą Rusijos kariniams tranzitui?', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1993 m. kovo 16 d.

29 Jonas Baranauskas, 'Graciovas stumia Baltijos šalis į NATO', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1993 m. kovo 31 d.

30 'Rusijos gynybos ministras priėmė Prezidentą Algirdas Brazauskas', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1993 m. gegužės 19 d.

It was not easy for the new political leadership and especially Brazauskas, who was burdened with responsibility. He had to balance between two poles: on the one side Russia's pressure was increasing, and on the other there was a constant and rather intense flow of criticism coming from the opposition and its informal leader, Landsbergis. As Nekrasas noted, "the role of the key figure in foreign policy-making was a new one for Brazauskas, who had very limited experience in this field. In the first months of his presidency he clearly felt uneasy in foreign policy"³¹. Nevertheless, the President's behaviour gradually became more resolute. It is natural that first the composition of the delegation for negotiations with Russia had to be changed because it no longer reflected the new distribution of political forces in Lithuania. On March 25, a representative of the LDLP, a member of the Seimas Foreign Affairs Committee, Virgilijus Bulovas, was appointed head of the delegation. The Ambassador to Moscow, Bickauskas, was also replaced since his term of office had ended and he had won elections to the Seimas. The opposition tried hard to have the former head of the Lithuanian delegation for negotiations with Russia, Stankevicius, appointed to this position. However, the President was firm and remained loyal to his earlier position of avoiding any strain on relations with Russia. Therefore, instead of Stankevicius, whose political commitments were clear enough and whose candidacy was insistently proposed by the opposition on the basis of his competence and accumulated experience, Romualdas Kozyrovicius became the Lithuanian Ambassador to Moscow. Kozyrovicius had been the Minister of Material Supply in the first Government of Prunskiene, and during the economic blockade was in charge of the so-called "horizontal-direct" relations with producers and suppliers in Russia and the other Soviet republics. The appointment of a specialist on organisation of economic activities as Ambassador to Moscow was a clear indication of the priorities of the new political leadership in relations with Russia, since Moscow was and remained important for Lithuania's economy.

Generally speaking, during the summer of 1993 the withdrawal of the Russian troops proceeded relatively smoothly, despite Russia's diplomatic *demarches*. Groups of military experts co-ordinated technical details of the troop withdrawal and other related issues. It was obvious that at least the Russian military leadership in Lithuania came to terms with the fact of its departure and was concerned with withdrawing the units that were under their command from Lithuania in order to settle in the new places of deployment before the winter. Meanwhile the political circles of the Russian government still hoped for a revision of the undertaken obligations and wanted to turn the course of events to their own advantage. Political negotiations went less smoothly than expected. After the meeting of the Russian and Lithuanian delegations for negotiations that took place in Vilnius on May 19-20, it appeared once again that the positions of the two sides were totally different. After the meeting no agreement was parafied, although it was anticipated that at least agreements on transit and pensions of military officers would be reached. Nothing was achieved in negotiations on the main political agreement concerning the withdrawal of the Russian troops. The Russian delegation proposed the same amendments that were presented way back in October 1992. At that time they were immediately rejected by the Lithuanian negotiators, who, in their turn, proposed negotiating the issue of compensation for the damage inflicted

31 Evaldas Nekrasas, Op. cit, p.17.

on Lithuania since 1940. The Russian side was of the opinion that this issue required separate negotiations. There was yet another problem: Russia demanded compensation for the real estate possessed by its armed forces. Lithuania could make no concessions in this respect since this would have been at variance with the law stipulating that all property possessed by the occupying armed forces was the property of Lithuania. And second, as early as June 14, 1992, the Lithuanian citizens had expressed their clear demand for compensation for damage.

The Russian negotiators accused the Lithuanian side of trying to avoid the signing of the political treaty and insisted that without this treaty the timetable of the troop withdrawal was not legally binding. Threats were issued that if the political agreement was not signed, Russia would find a legal basis not to implement said timetable at all. This could be practically equated with an ultimatum; however, the head of the Lithuanian delegation, Bulovas, described the meeting as fruitful and useful. First, the negotiations did not end in a deadlock, and, second, priorities were set for the subsequent negotiation rounds, i.e. the negotiations regarding transit, most-favoured nation status, border delineation and issues of repatriation³². On May 21 Brazauskas sent to Moscow compromise proposals concerning the troop withdrawal treaty which, in the opinion of many experts, were much more benevolent towards Russia than the earlier position of the Lithuanian delegation. However, Russia did not react to them in any way. Probably by the decision of the President, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Povilas Gylys, took the initiative to rectify the situation. On July 29, 1993, the Minister together with a group of experts flew to Moscow on a working visit. At the meeting with the Russian delegation for negotiations, they discussed the agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops and the possibility of Brazauskas' visit to Moscow. Following the visit of Gylys, the Lithuanian President received a letter from the Russian President containing an invitation to visit Moscow on August 5 and sign the treaty on troop withdrawal. According to the head of the Russian delegation for negotiations, Isakov, at the meeting the text of the treaty on the troop withdrawal was finally approved by both sides. He also said that Russia was prepared to compensate for damage done by the troops deployed in Lithuania from the moment they became the Russian armed forces from the legal point of view, i.e. beginning in 1992. The head of the Russian delegation also said that compensation for damage from 1940 was out of the question. He stated that an article referring to the troop withdrawal as Russia's international obligation was eliminated from the treaty; in addition, Lithuania's unilateral statement on the non-legalisation of the presence of the Russian troops and further negotiations on compensation for damage that had been previously attached to the treaty was also allegedly rejected. However, the head of the Lithuanian delegation, Bulovas, denied Isakov's statement that the text of the treaty was finalised. According to Bulovas, after the meeting in Moscow, Isakov had presented to the Russian President a variant that was not approved by Lithuania and suggested that it be signed. During the few days before the Lithuanian President's visit to Moscow, efforts were made to co-ordinate the positions of both sides on the text of the treaty, but unfortunately to no avail. Both sides continued to hold to their positions. On August 5, after consultations with Minister Gylys and members of the negotiating delegation, Brazauskas decided against going to Moscow. In his opinion, Article 12 of the treaty

32 See: 'Rusijos derybininkai pasitiki Lietuvos Seimu', Lietuvos aidas, 1993 m. geguzes 23 d.

on troop withdrawal, which addressed the issue of compensating Lithuania for damage, "needed to be discussed more thoroughly with the Russian side since their proposal was clearly unacceptable to us"³³. Hence, the visit of the Lithuanian delegation to Moscow on August 5-6 did not bring the positions of both sides any closer. Russia also wanted to eliminate from Article 1 of the draft treaty, where Russia commits itself to withdraw its troops from Lithuania, the words "fulfilling its international obligation", since in Russia's opinion such obligations would arise only upon the signing of an appropriate agreement. The Lithuanian negotiators maintained that Russia's international obligations arose from Article 15 of the CSCE Helsinki Declaration of July 1992 and the Resolution of the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Therefore, despite Lithuania's benevolent position and its inclination to settle issues "without much ado", Russia was in fact blackmailing the Lithuanian leadership in an attempt to force it to sign an unfavourable political agreement. On September 10, the Lithuanian delegation issued an invitation to its Russian counterpart to come to Vilnius for further negotiations. However, according to Isakov, there was nothing to negotiate about, because Lithuania was holding to preliminary provisions that were absolutely unacceptable to Russia³⁴. The head of the Russian delegation did not reject the possibility, though, that the withdrawal of the troops could be suspended. Russia's position appeared wholly unconstructive when on August 17, the Lithuanian National Defence Minister, Butkevicius, announced that he had received a message from the Russian Defence Ministry about the suspension of the troop withdrawal. This step was explained by the fact that no agreement was reached in bilateral negotiations and that Lithuania's demands were unacceptable to the Russian side. Certainly, Russia's decision could be treated as a political step and the Lithuanian side could insist on another round of negotiations. Brazauskas telephoned Yeltsin and agreed to meet in the immediate future. The planning of such a meeting between Presidents provoked the indignation of the Lithuanian opposition parties and was assessed as a downright submission to Russia's pressure, an expression of inaction and incompetence.

At last, when on August 20 an official document arrived announcing the suspension of the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Lithuania, and after the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister received another document which accused Lithuania of changing its position in negotiations and deliberate procrastination, it was decided to take more resolute steps. It is difficult to say how much this decision was influenced by Brazauskas' resolve and how much it was affected by the increasingly active opposition. In any case it was evident that the issue of foreign troop withdrawal so vital to Lithuania was as if "suspended in the air". President Brazauskas and the Government controlled by the LDLP faced the danger of great discredit and probably even political crisis in the event that the Russian troops were not withdrawn by the set deadline. Therefore, on that same day the Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a statment

33 Arturas Racas, 'Prezidentas nusprendė i Maskva kol kas nevaziuoti, pasigedo oficialios informacijos, o žurnalistams siule daugiau galvoti apie paprasta zmogu', Lietuvos rytas, 1992 m. rugpjucio 5 d.

34 See: Arturas Racas, 'Rusijos derybu delegacijos vadovo nuomone: pateikdami is anksto nepriimtinus pasiulymus, Lietuvos atstovai susikuria nauju problemu', Lietuvos rytas, 1993 m. rugpjucio 12 d.

charging Russia with the breach of the timetable of the troop withdrawal signed on September 8, 1992, the CSCE and UN resolutions, and disregard for its own international commitments. The suspension of the troop withdrawal was evaluated as an attempt to exert pressure on the course of negotiations. In its statement, the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry denied Russia's accusations of changing position and maintained that for more than two months since May 21, 1993 there was no response from Russia to President Brazauskas' proposals and therefore Russia could not claim that the issue of compensation for damage was new.

During the last weeks of August 1993, relations between Lithuania and Russia were in an absolutely critical condition. This was a true political "fever". Neither the visits of Justas Paleckis and Albinas Januska, nor a subsequent visit of Bulovas to Moscow brought the positions of the sides any closer to each other. On August 22, the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry announced that negotiations between Russia and Lithuania were terminated and the troops would be withdrawn in compliance with Russia's obligations, but at a time convenient to Russia. To support its arguments, Russia underlined that it could not tolerate being treated as a successor of the Soviet aggression and that Russia was merely the successor of the Soviet Union and did not owe anything to anyone.

President Brazauskas was left with no choice but to resort to the tactics that had already been tested in the times of Landsbergis and try and negotiate with Yeltsin. This time, when the matter seemed hopelessly lost, both sides came to an agreement. On August 30, Brazauskas announced on Lithuanian radio that the Russian troops were going to withdraw from Lithuania according to the September 8, 1992 timetable, i.e. by August 31. This agreement was reached after a morning telephone conversation between Brazauskas and the Russian President. Brazauskas also stated that he and Yeltsin had agreed on a summit in mid-September and that both sides approved the text of a bilateral declaration which confirmed the possibility of signing a bilateral agreement on most-favoured nation status, and that it was agreed that the issue of compensation for damage would be the subject of further negotiations. On August 31, just before midnight, the last Russian soldier left the territory of Lithuania. However, the festive mood had already been spoilt³⁵. More than two years later it appeared that even after August 30, 1993, a remainder of the Russian armed forces was still in Lithuania and that the last unit left the explosives storage facilities in Radviliskis as late as November 1993³⁶. At the time this delay was not made public for political considerations and August 31, 1993 is regarded as the day of the official withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania. The Lithuanian political leadership succeeded in preserving its prestige in the eyes of the public and in finishing the work that had been initiated by the previous political leadership. Russia in its turn did not dare violate its international obligations, although it was blackmailing Lithuania to the full.

35 Ramune Lazauskaite, 'Politikai nepanoro, kad roziniai jurginai Rusijos kareiviu isleistuvese Kaune butu iteikti grojant iskilmingai iskilmingiems "Gelezinio vilko" marsams', Lietuvos rytas, 1993 m. rugsejo 1 d.

36 See: Manvydas Gostautas, Gintaras Miksiunas, Op. cit.

When evaluating the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania, it should be noted that this was an event of extraordinary importance to Lithuania - for the internal consolidation of a recently restored state and for its establishment as a subject of international politics. This was significant from the point of view of domestic politics since this task was fulfilled by mobilising to the maximum the efforts of the entire Lithuanian political elite regardless of its ideological orientation. The preparatory and the main part of the work was done and fundamental agreements with Russia were achieved at the time when Landsbergis was at the helm of the state's foreign policy. However, after the 1992 elections, the LDLP that came into power preserved the continuity of this policy and made sure that the earlier agreements with Russia were implemented. From the point of view of international politics, the importance of this lies in the fact that Lithuania and Russia were not of equal strength. Therefore, to force a much more powerful state, which was also famous for being an unreliable partner, to fulfil its obligations was a momentous achievement indeed. Lithuania, like so many other countries, had long experience in dealing with Russian diplomacy, the characteristic features of which were inconsistency and contradictoriness, inclination to frequent changes in its position or treating its commitments in a way beneficial only to itself.

Despite all this, Lithuanian politicians succeeded in taking advantage of the earlier investments put into the relations with Russia and, through participation in such organisations as the United Nations and CSCE, in mobilising international public opinion and achieving the adoption of resolutions favourable to Lithuania. A Finnish political scientist, Pertti Joenniemi, attached much importance to this fact. He holds that it is unusual for small states to behave in such a way: to manage to mobilise international public opinion on bilateral problems and to be able to avoid a confrontation *tete-a-tete* with a far more powerful opponent. This, according to him, throws doubt upon and necessitates a revision of the theories on the behaviour of small states³⁷. And yet, such a conclusion is a little too hasty. The victory of Lithuania and the other Baltic states is an exception rather than a rule. This is confirmed by the further development of Lithuanian-Russian relations.

37 See: Pertti Joenniemi, 'The Baltic Countries as Deviant Cases: Small States in Search of Foreign Policies' in Pertti Joenniemi, Peter Vares (eds.) *New actors on the international arena: The Foreign Policies of the Baltic Countries*, Tampere Peace Research Institute Research Report. No 50. (Tampere, 1993).

4 The Problem of Russian Military Transit to the Kaliningrad District

The end of the summer of 1993 and the withdrawal of the Russian troops marked the beginning of a new stage in Lithuanian-Russian relations. Both states were no longer burdened by the complicated problems of the troop withdrawal, the solution of which had required tireless efforts, so the tension about and fear of the breach of the withdrawal timetable receded.

With the end of the "feverish" summer of 1993, new possibilities opened up for the expansion of relations which would conform to the norms of inter-state co-operation. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania did not eliminate the problems arising from a complicated history of mutual relations and the geopolitical realities that evolved after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The principal problems were Russia's military transit through the territory of Lithuania, the issue of compensation for damage done during the Soviet occupation and annexation, and the settlement of trade and economic relations.

The first group of problems connected with transit was determined by the fact that by the autumn of 1993, the Russian troops left only Lithuania, but not Latvia or Estonia. In addition, the Russian armed forces were still being withdrawn from Germany and there was a huge concentration of military forces in the Kaliningrad district, right on the Lithuanian border. Thus Lithuania, although free from the Russian troops, was still completely encircled by them. Lithuanian territory was used by Russian military troops for regular transit. On the one hand, there was a movement from west to east because of the Russian troop withdrawal from eastern Germany; on the other hand, there was also a certain degree of movement from east to west because Russia needed to provide supplies for its military units in the Kaliningrad district. Against the background of Lithuania's need to ensure and consolidate its security, Russian military transit through Lithuanian territory was and continues to be the main problem in Lithuanian foreign policy towards Russia.

The second group of issues is connected with the part of the consequences of the occupation and annexation of Lithuania that has yet to be eliminated. First, there was a question of damage caused by the occupation and annexation and compensation for it. As was mentioned above, this demand was supported by Lithuanian citizens at the June 14, 1992 referendum, and in the summer of 1992 this issue complicated and nearly destroyed the timetable of the troop withdrawal. The Lithuanian side held Russia responsible for the damage done to Lithuania during the period of the Soviet administration. From the point of view of Lithuania, Russia was supposed to pay compensation for the deportation and annihilation of Lithuanian citizens during Stalin's rule, as well as the other losses sustained by the state of Lithuania and its economy. It

was clear that this was more a political than a financial issue. Fifty years of occupation is a rather long period, which makes it impossible to make accurate calculations of all the damage and losses suffered by Lithuania. Therefore, the final figures indicating the losses are not important if compared with Russia's political responsibility. Russia rejects this issue altogether. Russian politicians maintain that Russia never occupied Lithuania - the Soviet Union did. Such a statement sounds rather controversial since Russia declares itself from the point of view of international law a successor of the rights and obligations of the Soviet Union. It seems that Russia becomes a successor of the Soviet Union only when it considers it useful (for taking over property abroad or gaining a permanent seat at the UN Security Council), and if it is not, then Russia refuses to take responsibility for the actions of the former Soviet Union. For example, the troops in the Baltic states are considered Russia's, but not the villainous acts carried out or damage done earlier on. Hence, Russia offers to compensate only for the damage inflicted on Lithuania by the troops after they came under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation, i.e. since January 1992. Negotiations on this issue continue to this day and it seems that it will take a long time before any concrete results are obtained. In theory, though, the possibility of receiving damage compensation exists.

An example of extraordinary injustice and discrimination towards Lithuania is the case of the buildings of diplomatic posts in Paris and Rome which belonged to Lithuania prior to 1940 and were occupied by the then Soviet Union; another example is the deposits of Lithuanian citizens in *Vneshekonombank* that have not been returned to this day. In the former Soviet Union all the citizens were compelled to keep their savings in hard currency in one central bank - *Vneshekonombank*. The savings of the Lithuanian citizens were frozen in this bank after Lithuania declared its independence, and in 1990 Lithuania was subjected to economic sanctions. When in 1992 the former Soviet financial system totally collapsed, Lithuania's payments from Russia ceased altogether. The Lithuanian government compensated a part of its citizens' losses at its own expense. So far, despite the normalisation of the situation, efforts to retrieve the deposits of the Lithuanian citizens from Russia have been unsuccessful.

Lastly, the third group of problems in Lithuanian-Russian relations is related to economic and trade co-operation. Russia remains an important partner from whom Lithuania purchases its main energy resources and to whom Lithuania sells a considerable part of its production. Thus the settlement of mutual payments and granting each other most-favoured-nation status are of primary importance for Lithuania's economic welfare.

The above-mentioned groups of problems determined the further development of Lithuanian-Russian relations after the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Lithuania. During negotiations that took place in mid-September 1993, Lithuania and Russia reached an agreement concerning Russia's military transit from Germany through Lithuania and a compromise solution on payment was found. Co-operation in the spheres of air, sea and river communication was also arranged. At last, on November 4, the Lithuanian President, Brazauskas, went on his first official trip to Moscow where he met with Russian President Yeltsin. During the meetings they discussed important treaties, although they were not signed due to technical errors. Therefore, it was

agreed that the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Viktor Chernomyrdin, was to come to Vilnius in mid-November to sign the documents. At the press conference, Brazauskas said that the Lithuanian side "was very interested in the treaty on further economic and trade co-operation and other treaties and agreements on the transit of all types of transport, as well as in cargo transit through the Lithuanian territory." As journalists discovered, the issue of compensation for damage was not on the agenda of the Moscow meeting³⁸.

As had been agreed, on November 18 Chernomyrdin arrived in Vilnius on an official visit. He noted that one of the items discussed during negotiations was the military transit from Russia to Kaliningrad through Lithuania. He stated that treaties that would regulate all the issues related to military transit during the first quarter of 1994 could now be approved. On the same day, ten agreements were signed, the most important for Lithuania being the one signed by the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Adolfo Slezevicius, and Chernomyrdin on economic and trade relations, which established most-favoured-nation status and ensured the tax-free transit of goods through the territories of both countries. It also stipulated that the treaty would be in effect for five years from the day of its ratification with automatic renewal for another five years. This treaty was to come into force on the day when both parties informed each other that the required constitutional procedure had been carried out to make the treaty operational.

Another important agreement was signed: the regulations concerning transit of Russian troops and military materiel withdrawn from Germany across Lithuanian territory. This agreement also contained provisions on tariffs and payments for the transit. These documents came into effect on the day of their signing and were supposed to be operational until the complete withdrawal of the armed forces of the Russian Federation from the German Federal Republic, and no longer than until December 31, 1994.

Another important agreement signed, upon which Russia had constantly insisted throughout negotiations, concerned the granting of social guarantees to retired Russian military officers who permanently reside in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Minister of Transport, Birziskis, and his Russian counterpart, Yefimov, signed agreements on air communication, international motor-car communication, trade navigation and co-operation in the sphere of river communication. This treaty supplemented the basic Lithuanian-Russian treaty in the sphere of communication that was signed in the beginning of 1992. Both sides signed an agreement on co-operation between their ministries of internal affairs.

This is how the famous "package of agreements" of November 1993 appeared, which regulates most spheres of co-operation between Lithuania and Russia to the present day. However, implementation of the agreements was not easy. The regulations on military transit came into force immediately, while the ratification of the agreement on most-favoured-nation status, of great importance to Lithuania, was postponed

38 See: Ramune Sakalauskaite, 'Kodel Kremliuje nebuvo pasirasytos Lietuvos ir Rusijos sutartys ir susitarimai?', Lietuvos rytas, 1993 m. lapkricio 6 d.

throughout 1994. This caused difficulties in Lithuanian-Russian relations in 1994, which was not much easier than 1993 had been.

In general, it should be noted that despite the complexity of relations, the Lithuanian political leadership and President Brazauskas kept their election promises and pursued moderate and adaptive tactics in relations with Russia. As before, bombastic phrases were avoided, and reaction to various Russian provocations and direct blackmail was calm, even slack. Propaganda and appeals to the international community were resorted to only in extreme cases. Thus, the opposition had plenty of pretexts for criticism of what was, in their opinion, an overly compliant Lithuanian stance toward Russia.

Since the Lithuanian-Russian agreement on transit was valid only until December 31, 1994, through nearly all of 1994 Russia was pressuring Lithuania to sign a special treaty on transit. Such a treaty would have given Russia exclusive rights to freely carry out military transit to and from the Kaliningrad district across the Lithuanian territory by railway, air and motorway. The so-called Kaliningrad problem had existed since the end of the Second World War, but in 1994 it became a central and urgent problem in Lithuanian-Russian relations.

The present Kaliningrad district is situated on the land of the old Western Lithuanian people, now extinct - the Prussians. Up to the eighteenth century this territory was populated almost exclusively by the Lithuanian people. Germans ruled estates and comprised the majority of the urban population. Ethnic relations were similar to those in Kurland, Livonia and Estonia where Latvians and Estonians formed the rural population, and Germans were landowners and town dwellers. After the great plague in the beginning of the eighteenth century large numbers of German colonists settled in this area. On this territory the ethnic composition became mixed. In the second half of the nineteenth century, under the influence of German schools and the army, local Lithuanians started losing their ethnic identity and began identifying themselves as Germans. By the Second World War a large part of the population on the territory of the present Kaliningrad district had already been Germanised and by the end of the war, with the advance of the Red Army, most inhabitants of this area were evacuated to Germany.

Upon the end of the war, at the Potsdam Conference, the territory of German East Prussia was divided. The southern part of East Prussia was transferred to Polish administration, and Königsberg and its environs were entrusted to the administration of the Soviet Union. The United States and Great Britain committed themselves to support the assignation of this land to the Soviet Union at the anticipated peace conference. The Soviet Union, though, without waiting for the conference, annexed the land and joined it to the Russian Federation, populating it with settlers from the Russian heartland. The remainder of the local inhabitants were either deported or exterminated.

As is well known, the peace conference never took place. The Cold War began instead. Therefore, the United States and Great Britain did not recognise the annexation carried

out by the Soviet Union, just as they did not recognise the forced incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union. It seems that at the international level the final solution of this problem was reached only in the summer of 1991, at the Moscow '4+2' conference which legalised the unification of Germany. The signed agreement defined and confirmed the territorial boundaries of present-day Germany. Any possible German claims to this land lost any legal basis they might have had. On the other hand, sometimes it is doubted whether the Moscow '4+2' conference can be considered the forum which settled and legalised the subordination of Kaliningrad to Russia, since the agreement speaks only about the borders of Germany.

However, at present no state (including Lithuania) officially questions the subordination of this land to Russia. This issue is raised only by radical political groups in Germany and Lithuania, and perhaps Poland. Lithuania itself has confirmed officially that it recognises the subordination of the Kaliningrad district to Russia. This was done by the Lithuanian-Russian treaty of July 29, 1991, in which each side recognised the other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On that same day a special agreement was even signed on co-operation regarding the economic, social and cultural development of the Kaliningrad district. Lithuania recognised the present borders with the Kaliningrad district and obligated itself to guarantee transit across its territory, as well as gas and electricity supplies. This was, of course, a compromise in exchange for the recognition the Republic of Lithuania received from Russia.

On the other hand, although officially the Kaliningrad issue is not considered a political and territorial problem, it is part of a whole complex of problems of security, economic co-operation and humanitarian issues. While the Soviet Union was intact these questions did not arise as pointedly, but when it collapsed the Kaliningrad district became an exclave of the Russian Federation, separated from the mainland by the states of Lithuania, Belarus and Latvia. The shortest distance separating the Kaliningrad district from Russia is 360 kilometres by direct air route, through a corner of the Latvian territory and across the very middle of Lithuania. Thus, from the geopolitical point of view, Lithuania's position between Russia and the Kaliningrad district could be compared to that of pre-war Poland. At that time Poland was between two parts of Germany - the mainland and East Prussia, and it felt constant threats to its security from both east and west. Lithuania is in a similar position and it is natural that there is hardly another state so concerned with finding a solution to the Kaliningrad issue. Understandably, Poland is also concerned about it, albeit to a lesser degree.

The Kaliningrad district raises concern in Lithuania first of all because it has the largest Russian military contingent. With regard to the concentration of troops Kaliningrad is one of the most militarised regions in Europe (about 100,000 troops). Although Russian official representatives often pledge that no new contingents will be introduced in this area, during the withdrawal from other states, including Lithuania and Latvia, troops were often moved to the Kaliningrad district.

Lithuania and other countries or organisations (e.g. the European Parliament) have expressed their concern about the large concentration of the Russian military forces in the Kaliningrad district and proposed its gradual demilitarisation. However, Russia's

position has been categorical - this is Russia's internal matter. According to the then Russian Vice Prime Minister, Sergei Shakhrai, "the Kaliningrad district had to remain Russia's military strategic outpost"³⁹. The district is important to Russia for its ice-free port (the only such port belonging to Russia in the Baltic region) and, of course, for its geostrategic position.

Apart from the main threat that the militarised Kaliningrad district raises to the entire Baltic littoral, Lithuania has to solve a very specific problem of military transit because, as mentioned earlier, the shortest land connection from Russia to Kaliningrad is through Lithuania. Civilian economic transit, just like economic co-operation and trade relations, does not pose any big problems and is even useful to Lithuania. In 1991, the Russian government declared the Kaliningrad district a free economic zone. Compared with other Russian regions, this territory offers better tax and customs conditions. Economic ties between Lithuania and the Kaliningrad district are regulated by the Lithuanian-Russian protocol on trade and economic co-operation signed on December 23, 1991. On July 1, 1993, the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Slezevicius, in his meetings with Shakhrai and the Head of Administration of the Kaliningrad district, Matochkin, agreed to establish trade missions from their respective countries. It was also agreed that the residents of Lithuania and the Kaliningrad district will enjoy a visa-free regime and duty-free transit through the territories of the respective countries. Efforts were made to expand economic co-operation further. On July 19, 1993, the Lithuanian Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Administration of the Kaliningrad district signed a free trade agreement. However, upon the instructions of the central authorities of Russia the treaty did not come into effect since the district administration allegedly exceeded its powers. The Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry also rejected this treaty.

The problem of Russia's military transit is by far more complicated and dangerous. As was mentioned before, in 1994 it became the central and most acute problem in Lithuania-Russian relations. While in Lithuanian foreign policy the year 1993 was the year of the Russian troop withdrawal, the year 1994 could be called the year of the problem of Russian military transit to and from Kaliningrad. As early as January 1994 Russia presented Lithuania with a draft treaty on military transit. Russia wanted free military transit across the Lithuanian territory by railway, air and motorway. Having familiarised itself with the draft, the Lithuanian working group for negotiations with the CIS countries decided to suggest to the Lithuanian government the preparation of general rules for the transportation of military and hazardous cargo across Lithuanian territory that would be applicable to all countries.

The Lithuanian government adopted a decision on March 9, 1994 that until the adoption of regulations on transportation of military and hazardous cargo, such transit would be temporarily carried out according to the agreement and protocol of November 18, 1993 that regulate Russia's military transit from Germany through Lithuania. The Russian side found this position unacceptable. Instead of agreeing with the general rules for the transportation of military and hazardous cargo as proposed by Lithuania, Russia began insisting on a special political agreement exclusively for

39 Sergejus Sachrajus, 'Kaliningradas - Kionigsbergas - Krulevecas...', Lietuvos aidas, 1994 m. rugpjucio 2 d.

Russian military transit to the Kaliningrad district. Such a proposal was opposed by the Lithuanian political opposition. In their opinion, if Lithuania signed a political agreement with Russia on military transit it would automatically find itself in Russia's military-political sphere of influence and would be politically committed to Russia. This would restrict Lithuania's freedom of movement in the international arena and make it dependent on Russia to a much larger extent than before. For example, the very idea of joining NATO would sound absurd. The Lithuanian government, under the pressure of the opposition, decided to reject the political agreement and to limit itself to unilateral technical transit regulations. When its proposals were rejected, Russia began finding fault with the technical regulations presented by Lithuania. It again resorted to the tactics of pressure and blackmail, although officially negotiations were not terminated.

In the spring of 1994 there were several meetings of negotiating teams, although they did not come to any concrete decisions. Beginning with November 18, 1993 the whole process of negotiations essentially came to a standstill. The Russian Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin, simply did not respond to the letters of the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Slezevicius, who was offering to continue negotiations. In pursuing its aims, Russia began putting off the ratification of the economic treaty signed on November 18, 1993, threatened to reduce gas and oil supplies and applied other economic measures, including double tariffs introduced on July 1. Slezevicius characterized Russia's actions as aggressive and hinted at a possible reduction of electricity to the Kaliningrad district. Double import tariffs on Lithuanian goods were disadvantageous not only to Lithuania but also to Russia itself. When visiting Vilnius on August 19 the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, promised to urge the Russian authorities to resume relations with Lithuania. The mayor was concerned about a marked drop in imports of relatively cheap Lithuanian goods to Moscow. This was confirmed by the Chairman of the Federation Council of Russia's Federal Assembly, Vladimir Shumeiko, who was in Vilnius on an official visit on September 5. He admitted that Russia delayed too long in granting most-favoured-nation status to Lithuania. According to him, this document should have come into force long before agreements on visa-free travel and military transit were signed.

On September 29 Slezevicius announced that the Government had already prepared rules for the transit of military and hazardous cargo through Lithuanian territory. At the end of October Russia sent its own proposals on military transit. Their examination in Lithuania was accompanied by criticism from the opposition addressed to the LDLP regarding a possible loss of sovereignty and a "vague" position towards Moscow. In the opinion of the opposition, the vagueness of the position of the political leadership on this issue and the confidentiality of negotiations, when decisions crucial to Lithuania were taken by a small group of people, were particularly dangerous. "But one is still left with the possibility to ask how far Lithuanian leaders have gone with their unknown promises and commitments"⁴⁰, said the opposition leader, Landsbergis, on November 12, 1994, at the conference on transit held by the Conservative party.

On November 11 Lithuania was visited by the head of the Russian delegation for negotiations, Isakov. The aim of this official visit was to simplify certain procedures

40 Vytautas Landsbergis, 'Derybos vienam atsiklaupus?', Lietuvos aidas, 1994 m. gruodžio 1 d.

connected with military transit. It seems that no agreement was reached, because on November 17 Prime Minister Slezevicius announced that the unilateral transit regulations established by the Lithuanian Government were coming into effect as of January 1, 1995. However, this did not occur because the Russian side refused to recognise and comply with them. Lithuania did not have any options or levers to force Russia to recognise such rules. Of course, Lithuania could resort to an open confrontation and declare that Russian military transit through Lithuania was forbidden in general. Unfortunately, up to now there is no possibility of implementing such a decision if it were adopted. It would be possible to control transportation by motorway and railway, but Lithuania's air space is practically indefensible. Thus, despite the protests of the opposition it was decided to seek compromise solutions.

At last, after negotiations by the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister, Gylys, in Moscow, on January 18, 1995, it was announced that the Lithuanian Government had extended the deadline for establishing procedures for transit of Russia's military materiel to December 31, 1995. Meanwhile, the procedure established by a mutual agreement of November 18, 1993 was to be followed, which concerned transit across Lithuania of Russian troops and military materiel withdrawing from Germany. According to Minister Gylys, this procedure would be operational until the end of 1995 with the possibility of extending it further. The Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister said that both sides won. According to him, the differences between the rules that came into force on January 18, 1995 and those adopted by the Government in the autumn of 1994 were only technical. The new rules would have been more detailed and would have included transit by air, while the "German" rules did not contain such provisions. Special permits were required for flights across Lithuanian territory. When explaining why the new transit regulations did not come into force on January 1, Gylys said that "Lithuania did not have a categorical position, only a negotiations position"⁴¹.

In exchange for the concession made by the Lithuanian Government in extending the so-called "German" rules, at last Russia agreed that most-favoured-status for Lithuania could come into effect. On January 18, 1995, the Lithuanian Ambassador to Russia, Kozyrovicius, was presented with two notes from the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry. One note stated that on the day of its receipt the agreement of November 18, 1993 on trade and economic relations was to come into effect. With another note the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry announced that Russia agreed with the proposal of the Lithuanian Government to extend the existing procedure for transportation of military and hazardous cargo.

This solved the question of transit of the Russian troops to and from Kaliningrad, which had been troubling Lithuania's political life ever since the spring of 1994. The problem was solved at least until the end of the year, if only temporarily. It was to be taken up at the end of 1995. However, since there is a possibility of another extension, one may assume that this problem will become acute only after parliamentary elections, if there are radical changes in the composition of the political leadership of the state. Today, looking at it from a one-year perspective, it seems that the compromise achieved with Moscow on military transit by extending the "German" rules was quite

41 'Ministruai - lanksti politika, o opozicijai - vel apgaule', Lietuvos rytas, 1995 m. sausio 19 d.

acceptable to Lithuania. The issue has not been finalised, but nevertheless, during 1995 there were no major problems with military transit. All the incidents regarding the violation of Lithuanian territorial integrity were of a totally different origin. In addition, Lithuania avoided signing an agreement with Russia that would have restricted its freedom of movement and at the same time the economic agreement on most-favoured-nation status came into effect in 1994, which was very important to Lithuania.

It is interesting to note that Russia's refusal to grant Lithuania most-favoured-nation status actually helped Lithuanian companies to readjust themselves and find new markets in the West. According to the Lithuanian Ambassador in Moscow, Kozyrovicius, "the length of abnormal trade relations with Russia (double tariffs), which discriminated against Lithuanian goods, was even beneficial for some of our firms. It forced them to find a favourable market in the West. Almost 80 per cent of all our foreign trade was with Russia, but during 1991-1993 when the trade agreement was inactive the level of trade fell to 29 per cent. This would have been even lower if not for the necessity of importing raw energy materials (fuel, natural gas). The reorientation of Lithuanian business is well illustrated by the example of commerce. In 1993 78 per cent of light commercial production was exported to the CIS. One year later this figure was reversed: 80 per cent of light commercial goods were exported from Lithuania to the West"⁴².

However, the opposition was very critical and suspicious of the policy of the Lithuanian political leadership towards Russia. "Sometimes we have to say harsh words about the present Lithuanian government, denounce it or reprimand it very seriously. But this is the only way to help it find within itself the tiniest trace of remorse or at least fear of responsibility"⁴³, declared Landsbergis at the end of 1994. Certainly this statement contains the rhetoric so characteristic of the opposition, but nonetheless, the importance of its role in helping President Brazauskas withstand Russia's pressure and make up his mind not to sign the political agreement on transit cannot be underestimated.

On the other hand, one should not make too much of its influence on the President either. When Brazauskas and the LDLP came to power, other important personalities emerged in Lithuanian foreign policy whose influence was reinforced by the fact that Brazauskas did not have much experience in that area. Most important was the President's adviser for foreign affairs, Justas Vincas Paleckis. According to the largest Lithuanian daily, *Lietuvos rytas*, "in the lobbies of politics the fifty-three year old presidential adviser for foreign affairs, Ambassador Justas Vincas Paleckis, was often considered the person with the strongest influence on the formation of foreign policy"⁴⁴. Paleckis and Brazauskas are linked by old ties from the last years of the

42 Romualdas Kozyrovicius, 'Co-operational problems between the Lithuanian Republic and the Russian Federation', *Lithuania Today: Politics & Economics*, 1995 June, Issue 5 (32), p. 3.

43 Vytautas Landsbergis, 'Derybos vienam atsiklaupus?', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1994 m. gruodžio 1 d.

44 Violeta Gaizauskaite, 'Prezidentas ir patarėjai: ar suderinti laikrodžiai. Trys vienos komandos politikai - trys zvilgsniai i Prezidento vykdoma uzsienio politika', *Lietuvos rytas*, 1995 m. liepos 1 d.

Lithuanian Communist Party. However, Paleckis left the LDLP and during the parliamentary elections was on the list of Social Democrats. Paleckis is a qualified diplomat and has extensive experience in the diplomatic service. He certainly added more pragmatism and moderation to Lithuanian foreign policy as compared to that pursued by Landsbergis. In his view, the foreign policy persistently proposed by the opposition is similar to the one that dominated at the beginning of the twentieth century and was nothing but bellicose hostility concealed beneath patriotic slogans. According to Paleckis, in 1991-1992 Lithuania was portraying Russia as a country doomed to be undemocratic, which was completely out of tune with the Western attitude⁴⁵.

Judging from his few public statements, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Gylys, is even more critical of the opposition's attitude towards Russia⁴⁶. As minister he became famous for his idea of 'economisation' of foreign policy, that is giving priority to international economic and not political relations. His proposal can be understood if viewed against his background: before entering politics, Gylys was a professor of international economics at the University of Vilnius. In practice, however, he was given the role of an executive rather than an important participant in the decision-making process. For example, in negotiations with Russia on troop withdrawal and transit, Gylys had to co-ordinate "rough" draft documents with Russians. Therefore, he had to resist especially strong pressure from the opposition, including constant reproaches for too much compliance with his Russian counterparts. The agreement reached by Gylys in Moscow on January 18, 1995 to extend the validity of the "German" transit rules was characterised by the opposition as a surrender, almost a betrayal of Lithuania's interests, and Gylys' resignation was demanded. It is doubtful, though, whether this was his own and not the President's decision.

The fact that President Brazauskas is open to all opinions, hears different views but does not necessarily heed them is confirmed by his adviser for foreign affairs, Paleckis, and the former chief adviser, Raimundas Rajeckas⁴⁷. This is also proved by the following facts. In Maisiagala, on May 20, 1995, the Latvian and Lithuanian heads of state and government held a secret meeting at which they tried to solve the issue of border delineation in the economic zone of the Baltic Sea. They signed a memorandum according to which the Lithuanian-Latvian border was to be established in conformity not with the 1982 Jamaica Convention, which would have been more beneficial to Lithuania, but with the 1958 Geneva Convention, according to which the oil-rich fields would be located in the Latvian economic zone. The Maisiagala memorandum raised the roof in Lithuanian political circles. Although Prime Minister Slezevicius maintained that the memorandum received too much unnecessary attention and that the agreements reached in Maisiagala were only recommendations, the opposition parties demanded their immediate denunciation⁴⁸. Later it became clear that neither the President's adviser for foreign affairs, Paleckis nor the Foreign Affairs Ministry were warned in advance of the possibility of such a development. Minister Gylys and his

45 See: *ibidem*.

46 Povilas Gylys, 'As tikiu geranoriskos politikos veiksmingumu', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1993 m. kovo 31 d.

47 See: Violeta Gaizauskaite, *op. cit.*

48 See: 'Maisiagala - tai ne "Literatu svetaine"', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1995 m. birželio 2.

deputies even considered resigning, because the meeting between the Lithuanian and Latvian heads of state in Maisiagala was concealed even from those officials of his Ministry who were directly involved in negotiations with Latvia on the sea border of the economic zone. It should also be borne in mind that Brazauskas could have adopted such a decision due to his friendly personal relations with the Latvian President, Guntis Ulmanis, or on the advice of the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Slezevicius, who was also present at the meeting.

Indeed, Slezevicius was known to take the initiative unexpectedly in negotiations with Latvia on the border issue. This gives reason to believe that he also had some influence on Brazauskas with regard to other issues in Lithuanian foreign policy. Speaking about Lithuanian-Russian relations, the opposition leader, Landsbergis, has remarked about the possible influence of the Prime Minister. On January 9, 1995, he commented on the issue of Russian military transit that looked as if it would never be solved and the planned visit of Slezevicius to Moscow. Landsbergis then said that it could suddenly occur to Slezevicius to sign a treaty on transit. Landsbergis went on: "And here I would like to say that I am greatly concerned about one danger - which is Mr. Slezevicius' inclination to improvise and his sudden intrusions into Lithuanian foreign policy"⁴⁹.

The issue of military transit was settled by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Gylys, during his January 17 visit to Moscow, i.e., before the official visit of Slezevicius. However, it is worthwhile to bear in mind Landsbergis' remark when studying the mechanisms of the formation and functioning of Lithuanian foreign policy.

5 The Problem of Ethnic Minorities in Lithuanian-Russian Relations

Having solved (at least for the time being) the problem of military transit, relations between Lithuania and Russia seemed to become stable and return to normal. It appeared that other urgent issues also made a move out of a deadlock. On February 24, 1995, at the invitation of the Russian Premier, Chernomyrdin, a Lithuanian governmental delegation led by Slezevicius visited Moscow on a one-day working visit. After the meeting between the delegations, representatives of both sides signed three inter-governmental agreements: on border control posts, co-operation and mutual assistance in customs affairs, and on private travel. The subjects of the discussion were the problems of the Russian-speaking citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian communities in Russia.

Generally speaking, it should be noted that the issue of ethnic minorities is not of much significance in Lithuanian-Russian relations. In this respect the relations between Lithuania and Russia stand out among other inter-state relations in the former Soviet

49 'Karinio tranzito per Lietuvą klausimu', *Laisvosios Europos radijo pranešimas*, 1995 m. sausio 9 d.

Union. The main reason for such a favourable situation is, of course, the demographic situation in Lithuania. The Russian ethnic minority comprises only 10 per cent of the Lithuanian population⁵⁰; therefore, the problems related to it have never gained substantial political weight or exceptional importance in mutual relations (unlike in Latvia and Estonia). All Russians living in Lithuania could choose whether to leave or become Lithuanian citizens. It cannot be denied, though, that certain problems, however minor, exist.

First, this is connected with Russia's recurrent declarations of its commitment to defend the rights of Russian-speaking persons in the so-called "near abroad". A particularly aggressive statement on this issue was made by the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister, Kozyrev, when he spoke before the Foreign Policy Council in April 1995. He said that although there is no talk in any country, except Latvia and Estonia, about pushing Russians out, Russians feel pressure on them at everyday and administrative levels. According to Kozyrev, this is proved by the growing numbers of immigrants in Russia. He said that there were many means of defending the rights of Russians, from concern expressed by an anonymous official of the Foreign Affairs Ministry to economic and political sanctions. It could even become necessary to use direct armed force to defend the rights of the compatriots (*otechestvinniki*)⁵¹.

Lithuanian reaction to this statement was rather prompt, although within the limits of standard diplomatic intercourse. The Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Albinas Januska, called the Russian Ambassador in Lithuania, Nikolai Obertyshev, and requested an official explanation of Kozyrev's statement on the use of direct armed force to protect the rights of Russian-speakers abroad. The Ambassador expressed his conviction that the Minister's statement did not concern Lithuania. This was the end of the "incident".

Speaking about real problems of ethnic minorities, i.e. about the situation of Lithuanians in Russia and Russians in Lithuania, it should be said that Russians in Lithuania enjoy far broader rights and have far better conditions for the preservation of their ethnic identity than do Lithuanians in Russia. Russians in Lithuania can use the network of Russian primary and secondary schools supported by the state, and the translation and publishing of all the necessary textbooks and teaching material into Russian is paid for by the Lithuanian government. Considering the economic difficulties of a transition period, the Russian press in Lithuania is doing relatively well. It is interesting to note that the main and only Russian daily published in Lithuania, *Echo Litvy*, has always belonged to and been financed by the government (like the analogous Polish daily *Kurier Wilenski*). With a circulation of 15,000, *Echo Litvy* is the cheapest paper in Lithuania and is much less expensive than Lithuanian-language newspapers. In the opinion of the editor-in-chief, Vasilij Yemelyanov, this is very good because the Russian readers are not rich and otherwise they would not be able to buy the newspaper. As a rule, in Lithuania Russians work at major industrial enterprises that were oriented towards the market of the former Soviet Union, and most of these

50 See: Natalija Kasatkina, 'Multi-ethnic Lithuanian composition' in Meilute Talijunaite (ed.), *Lithuanian Society in Social Transition* (Vilnius, 1995), p. 51.

51 'Kaip Lietuva reaguoja i Maskvos ketinimus ginti buvusiose tarybineose respublikose gyvenancius rusus', *Laisvosios Europos radijo pranesimas*, 1995 m. balandzio 18 d.

enterprises have suspended their activities. At one time there were discussions about privatising the newspaper. However, according to Yemelyanov, had the newspaper not belonged to the Seimas and the Government, it would have been difficult to keep its tone calm and objective. In this regard, *Echo Litvy* was indeed a very successful element in Lithuanian policy towards the Russian ethnic minority. It is paradoxical that the Russian *Echo Litvy* publishes more official documents of the Seimas and the Government than any Lithuanian-language newspaper. The latter were been privatised a long time ago and in trying to be more attractive to the readers they avoid any official publications.

A certain politicisation of Russian ethnic minority problems can be observed in Lithuania. Unlike the better-organised Polish ethnic minority, Russians do not have a political organisation or their own representatives in parliament. In 1993 attempts were made to unite the Russians or Russian speakers into a political organisation - the Slav Confederation. On August 10, 1995, *Echo Litvy* began to promote the idea of a common non-political public and cultural organisation of Russians or even Russian speakers in order to unite all "compatriots"⁵².

It is important to note that the initiators of the new organisation base themselves on the draft law of the Russian Federation on assistance to Russian compatriots abroad and use the same notion of "compatriot" used in the draft. *Echo Litvy* published this draft law in August and invited all Lithuanian Russians to send in their comments and proposals⁵³. The draft law envisages supporting the organising efforts of the Russian compatriots and providing financial assistance through their organisations. The economic structures of such organisations would be granted favourable conditions for their businesses, like those given to the CIS countries. In addition, the draft contains a special article stating that the CIS terms should be given only to those compatriots residing in the Baltic states. "Compatriot" status can be claimed by any former Soviet citizen or his/her descendant regardless of nationality. He/she simply has to take an application to the Russian embassy. Such a "compatriot" who lives or works in Russia would immediately be granted privileges, and one living in Lithuania could claim financial assistance.

Although this draft contains some elements of dual citizenship, so far the Lithuanian authorities have not expressed their official position in this regard. According to the Deputy Director of the Department for Regional Affairs and Ethnic Minorities, Severinas Vaitiekus, the initiative of the newspaper *Echo Litvy* and other developments show that the issue of ethnic minorities is going through a stage of politicisation. However, Vaitiekus believes that these processes should not be dramatised - there have been similar initiatives in the past but they did not have a desirable effect. Speaking on *Radio Free Europe*, Vaitiekus said that positive developments could be observed

52 See: 'Obrashcheniye k chitatelyam', *Echo Litvy*, 10 avgusta 1995 g.

53 See: 'Zakon Rossiyskoy Federaciyi o sodeistviyi rossiyskim sootchestvennikam za rubezhom. Proyekt vnositsya deputatom Gosudarstvennoi Dumy FS RF L.A. Ponomarevym', *Echo Litvy*, 4 avgusta 1995 g.

because not political but rather cultural Lithuanian Russian organisations are becoming more active even in the countryside⁵⁴.

The situation of the Lithuanian minority in Russia is much worse than that of Russians in Lithuania. The Lithuanian authorities constantly receive complaints from Lithuanians living in Russia that they do not have any possibility to establish their own pre-school institutions and schools and thus they are rapidly losing their national identity. The Russian government has never given grounds to hope for financial support for a Russian Lithuanian newspaper. This problem is especially acute in the Kaliningrad district, which contains a relatively large Lithuanian community (about 20,000). Here the question of preserving the Lithuanian historical heritage is also acute. The local authorities view negatively any reminders of the history of the Lithuanian or Baltic culture; requests for the registration of the Lithuanian cultural community in Kaliningrad have been consistently rejected⁵⁵.

Therefore, it is only natural that during the above- mentioned meeting in Moscow on February 24, 1995 the Lithuanian and Russian Prime Ministers, Slezevicius and Chernomyrdin, had plenty to discuss about the situation of ethnic minorities.

The Russian Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin agreed in principle to solve other outstanding problems that were of great importance to Lithuania: the return of part of the Lithuanian archives from the former centralised stock of the Soviet Union; the return of the deposits kept in the *Vneshekonombank* by Lithuanian citizens; the return of the Lithuanian pre-war embassies in Rome and Paris. It was also agreed to seek compromise on the damage done by Russian troops to Lithuania's environment and economy. Later the Russian Ambassador in Lithuania, Obertyshev, hinted at a possibility of negotiations on compensation, especially since such a possibility was envisaged in the declaration of August 30, 1993 co-ordinated by the Lithuanian and Russian Presidents.

However, despite many promises by Russian representatives to resolve these issues in favour of Lithuania, they remain unresolved to this day. The main reason for this is not so much lack of good will on the part of Russia itself, but a clear shift of priorities towards the West in Lithuanian foreign policy. In August 1995, a political commentator of *Radio Free Europe*, Kestutis Girnius, when evaluating the accomplishments of the Lithuanian President during the first half of his term of office, made an apt remark that "it was ironic that the country which earlier on placed a very strong emphasis on the necessity not to anger Moscow is now way ahead of its neighbours Latvia and Estonia in co-operation with NATO. The President failed to improve relations with Moscow mainly because of Russia's unfriendly posture. The relations are correct, although the process of dissociation has progressed so far that it

54 'Prasideda naujas tautiniu mazumu gyvenimo politizavimo etapas', *Laisvosios Europos radijo pranesimas*, 1995 m. rugpjucio 16 d.

55 See: Arunas Stakisaitis, 'Lietuviu tautines mazumos Karaliauciaus kraste diskriminavimo faktai. Administracijos antilietuviska politika', *Atgimimas*, 1996 m. vasario 7 d., Nr. 5.

is impossible to stop⁵⁶. The clearest proof of the shift in priorities in Lithuanian foreign policy is the appeal to the NATO member-countries concerning Lithuania's request to join this political defence organisation, signed by the Lithuanian President Brazauskas on January 4, 1994.

6 Lithuanian-Russian Relations against the Background of a Possible NATO Enlargement

Against the background of Lithuanian-Russian relations, a potential Lithuanian membership in NATO along with the Central and Eastern European states is an entirely new and rather unexpected problem not only for Russia but also for Lithuania. At the beginning of this century, with the national liberation movement gathering speed, no one in Lithuania dared to imagine that this issue would ever be seriously considered. In the beginning it was obvious that Russia also could not decide on its position on this issue. Until the end of 1993 it seemed that Russia did not even mind the enlargement of NATO. On August 26, 1993, while visiting Poland, the Russian President, Yeltsin, said that the Eastern European countries could freely join any alliances they deemed necessary⁵⁷. This was essentially an official end to the so-called Brezhnev doctrine. However, soon after Yeltsin's speech in Warsaw the official Russian position began to change. It was maintained that NATO expansion did not correspond to Russia's interests, that the advance of the NATO armed forces towards Russian borders could raise a direct threat to Russia, since NATO would be able to use the military infrastructure of the former Russian allies and this would affect Russia's defence capability. Russia's negative attitude towards NATO enlargement was based not only on military, but also on a variety of other arguments. Nonetheless, behind them there was a desire to retain influence in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia was traditionally a dominant power in this region. Therefore, it was natural to expect that Russia would resist any attempts to push it out of the Eastern European and the Baltic regions.

It should also be noted that while opposing NATO enlargement in principle, Russia treats individual Central and Eastern European countries differently. Russia's opposition to the admission of the Vyshehrad states into NATO is not as categorical (except in the case of Poland which is of special geostrategic importance to Russia). It is anticipated that Slovakia will change its decision to join NATO in any case, which will make Hungary's admission a problem. The position of the Czech Republic is not as important to Russia as that of Poland. Thus, Russia's opposition to the NATO membership of the Vysegrad countries is firm (for example, there is an argument that when Central European countries join NATO Russia will point its nuclear weapon at

56 Kestutis Girnius, 'Prezidento A. Brazausko kadencijos vidurys: laimejimai ir netektys', *Atgimimas*, 1995 m. rugpjucio 2 d., Nr. 26.

57 See: Alexei K. Pushkov, 'A View from Russia' in Jeffrey Simon (ed.), *NATO Enlargement: Opinions and Options*, (Washington D.C., 1995), p. 123-143.

them⁵⁸). However, opposition to the admission of the Baltic states is particularly categorical because, according to Kozyrev, the territory of the former Soviet Union (which includes the Baltic states) is a special "zone of Russia's vital interests"⁵⁹. In Russia there is even a special term, "near abroad", used for this zone.

It is understandable that Lithuania and the other Baltic states which refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States cannot accept such treatment. This was expressed in the draft concept on Lithuanian foreign policy which states that Lithuania "cannot accept the term of 'near abroad' promoted by Russia, or Russia's special right to treat the former Soviet republics differently from the standard political practice applied in relations among the other countries of the world"⁶⁰. This principled position was confirmed by the head of Lithuanian foreign policy, President Brazauskas, in his interview for the Russian political journal *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* (*International Affairs*), where he stated that "we [Lithuania] would like to see a stable and predictable Russian policy which would not use the term 'near abroad' with regard to the Baltic states"⁶¹.

Russia's insistence on special rights to the territory of the former Soviet Union (including the Baltic states) is one of the most serious arguments for Lithuania to seek NATO membership even more actively. Lithuania's application for NATO membership has not yet received a positive reply and in the beginning of 1994, instead of full-fledged membership, NATO countries offered Lithuania, just like other Central and Eastern European countries, the opportunity to join a co-operation programme *Partnership for Peace (PfP)*. Lithuania tried to use to the full the possibilities given to it and in 1994-1995 became one of the most active participants in this programme.

At the beginning of 1995, after settling the issue of transit to Kaliningrad, there seemed to be promise of stability and normalcy in relations between Lithuania and Russia. However, when all the Central and Eastern European countries joined the PfP and discussions about a possible NATO enlargement eastwards became more intense, at the end of March and beginning of April tensions between Lithuania and Russia were renewed.

A true political storm was raised in Lithuania by three Russian combat helicopters which flew above Vilnius at a very low altitude on March 29, 1995. According to the provisional rules of the use of the Lithuanian air space adopted in 1992, Russian combat helicopters could fly across Lithuania only with an advance permit and only at the altitude of 400 metres. The helicopters that were observed on March 29 did not follow the agreed route and flew at a height twice as low as that allowed. When Lithuanian officials ordered the pilots to fly higher the latter climbed down by a further one hundred metres. The Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry reacted to this incident by sending Russia a note of protest, i.e. followed a standard diplomatic procedure.

58 See: Evaldas Sinkevicius (ed.), 'Nuomones apie NATO ispletima', Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo Informacijos ir analizes skyriaus leidinys. Nr 39 (89) (Vilnius, 1995), p. 5- 6.

59 Andrei Kozyrev, 'The New Russia and the Atlantic Alliance', NATO Review, 1993, No. 1, p. 3.

60 Lietuvos uzsienio politikos koncepcija (Vilnius, 1994), p. 15.

61 Algirdas Brazauskas, "Razvod po-litovskiy" i posle', *Mezhdunarodnaya zhiznj*, 1994, No. 4, s. 9.

However, this event received wide political response and, at the insistence of the opposition, an extraordinary session of the Seimas was convened. The session demonstrated very clearly two different political attitudes towards Russia. The Foreign Affairs Minister, Gylys, when answering questions from members of parliament, said that he did not want to give the incident of March 29 either political or military undertones and was of the opinion that this was simply aviation hooliganism, hence it was decided to send Russia a note of protest⁶². Meanwhile, the right-wing opposition leader, Landsbergis, gave a totally different evaluation of the incident. According to him, the actions of the Russian pilots were a demonstration of Russia's military presence in Lithuania; Russia was not satisfied with the capitulation of the Lithuanian Government when it agreed not to apply the rules of transportation of foreign military cargo as though Russia were no longer a foreign state. In Landsbergis' opinion, the weak Lithuanian Government was devoid of dignity and while consoling itself with the inadequate philosophy of a small state was subjected to further humiliation⁶³.

This illegal flight by the Russian helicopters above Vilnius brought to the surface not only different attitudes towards Russia and Russia's policy towards Lithuania, but also many problems that were troubling Lithuania. First, the incident revealed Lithuania's military inability. Certainly, this was no secret. However, according to the commentator from *Radio Free Europe*, Girnius, against the background of the discussions about the expediency of NATO enlargement, for the opponents of Lithuania's admission to NATO this was an especially handy argument. The flight of the helicopters "[was] yet another reminder to the NATO leadership that Lithuania, a candidate member of the Commonwealth, [was] incapable of defending its air space and it [would] be a NATO dependant at best, but not a partner"⁶⁴.

In general, in 1995 Russia's position towards NATO eastward enlargement and an eventual membership of the Baltic states was becoming more categorical and extreme, sometimes even growing into explicit threats. For example, on September 4, 1995 the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Sergei Krylov, declared to a correspondent of the BNS (Baltic News Service) that membership of the Baltic states in NATO was out of the question, otherwise Russia would have to take appropriate economic and military measures. Later it was specified that military measures stood for the reinforcement of Russia's border protection. Among the events that received the broadest response was the document published on October 2, 1995, in the Russian daily *Segodnja* entitled *Conceptual Provisions of the Strategy against the Main External Threats to the National Security of the Russian Federation*. The document stated that Russia had to oppose by force NATO enlargement to the east, and in the event the Baltic states were admitted to NATO the Russian armed forces would have to be deployed immediately on the territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The document also maintained that Russia would be right in doing this from the legal and moral points of view, because

62 'Apie Lietuvos Seimo svarstymus, skirtus Rusijos kariniu sraigtasparniu skrydziui virs Vilniaus', *Laisvosios Europos radijo pranesimas*, 1995 m. balandzio 5 d.

63 Ten pat.

64 Kestutis Girnius, 'Apie rusu karinius skrydzius Lietuvoje', *Laisvosios Europos radijo komentaras*, 1995 m. balandzio 9 d.

the admission of the Baltic states to NATO would equal the deployment of the Russian nuclear weapon in Cuba. The authors of the document were of the opinion that such an action could be easily carried out, because "analysis [showed] that no Western state would fight against Russia over the Baltic states. Economic sanctions [were] a possibility, although one could hardly expect a general trade ban, especially bearing in mind that Russia [exported] energy resources"⁶⁵.

Certainly this was not an official document, and only a report of a closed Russian defence research institute. The purpose of this document remains unclear. According to one version, it was ordered by the Russian Security Council, and according to another the document was created on the initiative of the members of the institute. The official political leadership of Russia dissociated itself from this document. One way or another it received a broad response in diplomatic circles and after a long break illuminated the potential threats to the Baltic states from Russia - the document spoke openly about a possible occupation of the Baltic states.

Lithuania's official reaction to the actions or statements of Russia, which has spoken against the NATO enlargement in an increasingly categorical tone, has always been very reserved. Only the reactions of the opposition leader, Landsbergis, to every bewildering action taken by Russia have been prompt and categorical. For example, in his comments on the statement made by the Russian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Krylov, on September 4, 1995, he said that "a Russian official [spoke] as if he [were] the master of the world who could forbid the West even to consider the possibilities of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia becoming NATO members. This [was] a challenge not only to the sovereignty of the Baltic states, but also to the West"⁶⁶. In the opinion of the presidential adviser for foreign affairs, Justas Paleckis, as the elections in Russia were drawing nearer more similar statements were to be expected. According to him, Lithuania "[could] only state the fact of a complete discord between our positions, because Lithuania [intended] to seek further membership in NATO"⁶⁷. The presidential adviser formulated his opinion about Russia's categorical statements concerning an eventual Lithuanian NATO membership as early as April in his interview to the daily *Diena*. ***There he said that Russia's bewildering actions were to be taken easy because the politicians of this country were still under the influence of the old stereotype of treating NATO as an adversary.*** In his opinion, through consistent efforts in seeking NATO membership and simultaneously maintaining friendly relations with Russia, Lithuania could even help Russia to get rid of such a stereotype. According to Paleckis, "Lithuania's policy remained the same"⁶⁸.

65 'Sotrudniki specinstituta predlogayut Rossii protivostoyat NATO i SSHA', Litovskij Kuryer, 1995, oktyabr', No. 35.

66 'Rusija ir Lietuvos naryste Siaures Atlanto santarveje', Laisvosios Europos radijo pranesimas, 1995 m. rugsejo 4 d.

67 Ibidem.

68 See: Justas Paleckis, 'Lietuvos politika nesikeicia', Diena, 1995 m. balandzio 5 d.

Conclusion

The development of Lithuanian-Russian relations in 1990-1995 allows us to draw general conclusions about relations between large and small states, about the real possibilities of a small state pursuing its interests in its relations with a much bigger and stronger neighbour. Russia has never been an easy partner for anyone, a partner whose actions could be foreseen and who was reliable. In order to achieve its goals Russia has never restricted itself in choosing means of pressure, beginning with diplomacy and propaganda and ending with threats to use force. Therefore, during the last five years Lithuanian politicians have had a difficult task, not only in reaching agreements with Russia, but also in ensuring their implementation.

Lithuania's experience is interesting in that from 1990 to 1995 it "tested" two types of tactics in relations with Russia. In 1990-1992, while the *Sajudis* government was in power and the formation of foreign policy was concentrated in the hands of the President of the Supreme Council, Landsbergis, Lithuania held to a strict and uncompromising position towards the Soviet Union. Having declared its Act of Independence, Lithuania, of course, first sought to realise its own national interests. On the other hand, though, it ran a great risk by openly provoking the Soviet Union and showing that Lithuania's aspirations could be only suppressed by force. Lithuania pursued a similar policy towards Russia when the latter became an independent subject of international politics and took over all the rights and obligations of the former Soviet Union. The goal of the policy of the Landsbergis government was the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania and compensation for damage done during the years of occupation.

On the one hand, such pressure on the Russian leadership and a successful mobilisation of world public opinion through the UN and CSCE yielded positive results. On the other hand, the deteriorating economic situation and indirect economic pressure used by Russia in breaching the agreement on the supply of energy resources and in closing its market resulted in big losses for Lithuania's economy and in a considerable decline in the living standard of the Lithuanian population (disruptions of and interruptions in the hot water supply and heating of residential premises). This was particularly strongly felt in the autumn and winter of 1992 and the winter and spring of 1993. It was during this period that parliamentary and presidential elections were held, bringing victory to the party of former Communists.

In the elections in October 1992 the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party received an absolute majority in the parliament, and its leader Brazauskas won presidential elections in February 1993. This party criticised Landsbergis and the former political leadership for an overly strict position towards "democratic Russia". The LDLP declared that present-day Russia was not the Soviet Union and that it was not right to "tease or condemn it undeservedly". Brazauskas and his supporters proposed pursuing a policy that would be principled and pragmatic at the same time, avoiding political statements and declarations that were of no concrete use and were merely offensive with respect to Russia. They also suggested that there should be more confidence in mutual relations and that unnecessary emotions should be avoided.

It is understandable that after the parliamentary and presidential elections Lithuanian foreign policy, and especially policy towards Russia, came under continuous attack from the opposition. For example, at the *Radio Free Europe* round table discussion about Lithuania's foreign policy in 1994, commentators were of the unanimous opinion that Lithuanian policy towards Russia was too compliant, that Lithuania was trying hard to please Moscow but regardless of this relations were not improving, whereas two years before (i.e. the period of Landsbergis' rule - G.V.) relations with Russia had been much more consistent and clear⁶⁹. This was better for both Lithuania and Russia, since the latter knew in advance what to expect from Lithuania. In his Annual Report about the situation in Lithuania and the country's internal and foreign policies in 1994, the Lithuanian President, Brazauskas, rejected such criticism saying: "I am concerned by the opinion of a certain group of people in Lithuania that Lithuania is supposedly making concessions to Russia. This is not the case. The fear of these people that the world will consider Lithuania a weak and unreliable partner, that Lithuania will not be able to defend its lawful interests of independence, is totally unfounded. Western politicians have confidence in the stable and flexible foreign policy of Lithuania which contributes to the enhancement of security in the entire region. *While the uncompromising nationalistic and anti-Russian policy of Lithuania is out of tune with modern Europe, it would serve very well the interests of the Russian imperialist forces and make it easier for them to carry out their intentions.* We must give a response to the actions of these forces. However, in Russia there are also supporters of democratic reforms. They existed in the past, they are there now and they will be there in the future. The policy pursued by democratic forces after crucial historic changes in Russia allows us to rely on them and avoid confrontation with the 'superpower' advocates"⁷⁰.

Nevertheless, despite the arguments presented by Brazauskas in favour of a moderate policy towards Russia, analysis of Lithuanian-Russian relations in 1992-1995 shows that Russia did not become more compliant or more inclined to compromise. Even though Lithuania's tone changed and became more reserved and Lithuania was trying to find common ground with Russia, mutual relations were increasingly strained and vague, especially bearing in mind the threatening tendencies in the political processes in Russia - the growing influence of the Communist and nationalist parties. The fever of the last weeks of the troop withdrawal in August 1993, concessions in military transit in exchange for most-favoured-nation status in 1994, and threats of occupation if Lithuania should join NATO in the autumn of 1995 confirm the characteristic feature of Russia's diplomacy: to use any means of pressure to achieve its goals regardless of the position of the weaker partner (Lithuania in this case) toward Russia.

However, despite constant tension lingering in Lithuanian-Russian relations, Lithuania's foreign policy towards Russia remains unchanged. On November 8, 1995, upon his return from the funeral of the Israeli Premier, Rabin, where he met briefly with the

69 See: 'Lietuvos valstybes politika. "Apskritojo stalo" pokalbis apie Lietuvos uzsienio politika "Laisvosios Europos" radijuje', Atgimimas, 1995 m. sausio 11 d., Nr. 1.

70 'Padetis Lietuvoje, Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus ir uzsienio politika', in Algirdas Brazauskas, Metinis Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidento pranesimas 1994, (Vilnius, 1995), p. 39.

Russian Prime Minister, Chernomyrdin, the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Slezevicius, made a statement typical of Lithuanian foreign policy towards Russia. He said that Lithuania and Russia did not have any problems (!). Such statements raise dissatisfaction and even frustration among the opposition, because everyone knows perfectly well that the list of problems in present-day relations between Lithuania and Russia is quite long. Here are just a few very important issues: 1) the question of the validity of military transit regulations has not been settled; 2) the Lithuanian land and sea border with the Kaliningrad district of the Russian Federation has not been delineated and the issue of ownership of the disputable oil field near Nida has not been solved; 3) Lithuania has not been given back the buildings of its diplomatic missions in Paris and Rome; 4) the savings of Lithuanian depositors previously kept in *Vneshekonombank* have not been returned; 5) the Lithuanian archives have not been returned; etc. Thus, problems abound, although open discussions are avoided. It is still believed that it is necessary to keep from straining relations and avoid offensive declarations.

A researcher of relations between the Baltic states and Russia, Olga Zhuryari, observed that "despite, or perhaps because of application of rather adaptive behaviour (i.e., a preparedness to compromise), Lithuania gained the most invulnerable position in relations with Russia. It has succeeded in reducing the causes of conflict to insignificant levels, hence fulfilling the criteria of Western standards on bargaining policy. Lithuania has the best results among the Balts in terms of the number of high level agreements with Russia. For example, the Lithuanian and Russian Prime Ministers signed nine agreements on trade and transit at a summit in Vilnius on November 18, 1993"⁷¹.

On the other hand, comparing the situations in the Baltic states with regard to their relations with Russia, Zhuryari believes that "as a matter of fact, the main task for Russia is to remain in place even when formally leaving: in Lithuania this problem is solved simply (the militarised kettle in the Kaliningrad region), in Latvia - partially (the agreement on Skrunda). Only Estonia after some time should be beyond even limited Russian control (...). However, Lithuania is considerably lagging behind Estonia when it comes to such static characteristics as the amount of sovereignty over territory"⁷².

The analysis carried out in this study provides a basis to agree with the foregoing description of the relations between Lithuania and Russia, although the value of the criteria used by Zhuryari in comparing the Baltic states is somewhat doubtful. In this context it is equally important to take into account another feature of foreign policy pursued by President Brazauskas and the LDLP Government - a clear shift towards the West and a growing desire to integrate into Western European economic and security structures. Lithuania has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1993 and has officially declared its intention to join NATO and the European Union. It actively participates in the *Partnership for Peace* programme and has already signed the Association Agreement with the European Union. In this context the modest adaptive

71 Olga Zhuryari, 'The Baltic Countries and Russia (1990 - 1993): Doomed to Good-Neighborliness?' in Pertti Joenniemi, Juris Prikulis (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of the Baltic Countries: Basic Issues* (Riga, 1994), p. 81 - 82.

72 Ibidem.

behaviour of Lithuania towards Russia seems more reasonable than the challenging behaviour of Estonia.