

LITHUANIA AS A CENTRE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION*

President Valdas Adamkus

Six years ago, when I took the oath of the President before the high Seimas for the first time, I pledged to pursue an open active foreign policy and develop friendly relations with neighbouring countries on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. Also I pledged to take efforts to ensure rapid accession of Lithuania to the European Union and NATO, and to raise the awareness of our people of the significance of our integration process.

Joint efforts of our political parties and the people produced positive results. 2004 is the year of a crucial breakthrough for Lithuania and a particularly important time for our internal and external policy, the future of our state and well being and security of its people.

Lithuania's accession to the European Union and NATO is a significant accomplishment of all Lithuanian people and the recognition of our democracy and economic achievements. It is a unique period in our historical, social and economic development, which opens up new possibilities for our country to promote, together with other nations, common values as well as to strengthen and enhance the area of security, stability and co-operation.

Our membership of the European Union and NATO provides far-reaching guidelines for Lithuania's development. Lithuania has joined European Union with a vision of becoming an active member of the European family of nations, acting in solidarity with all of them. Today we have a possibility to work, create, trade and travel within a united Europe free of internal borders.

I am committed to take every effort to translate our membership in the transatlantic community into a long-term partnership, which brings

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benefits to all and is based on equality and the democratic values of respect for man, freedom of expression and the rule of law, and which rests on the solidarity of nations who respect and foster each others culture, language and sovereign interests.

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Our integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures takes root in our centuries-long aspiration to anchor our country in Europe and establish European values in our internal and external policy as well as to share our accomplishments and experience with neighbours.

Development of good neighbour relations is one of the key goals of Lithuania's foreign policy. Our experience during the short period of independence has shown that the search for common interests and good relations with neighbours can be an effective tool in solving even the most complicated problems and in building the atmosphere of friendship and confidence within the region.

Now, when Lithuania has become part of the mainstream of European affairs, it will be able to develop with greater vigour neighbourly relations and co-operation within the region, and take part in the formation and implementation of the Union's neighbourhood policy.

We take interest in further enlargement of the European Union and NATO. We will continue to support nations, which aspire to European integration. Their success and democratic transformation will contribute to our success. This is the foundation of Europe's success now and in the future. This is also a guarantee that the door of the European Union and NATO will remain open to any nation, which has chosen the road to democracy and market economy.

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Lithuania's accession to the European Union and NATO has transformed into a new quality our country's engagement in regional and international political affairs.

It may seem that with accession to the European Union and NATO Lithuania has reached its key foreign policy goals. However, many important

tasks are ahead of us and to complete them we will need to make full use of possibilities which integration offers to us.

First, we should get firmly anchored in the European Union and NATO, deliver our obligations and contribute actively to the joint efforts of these organisations to build well being and security.

Second, we will seek to expand the Baltic regions' engagement with the neighbours in the North, the South and the East and contribute actively to the development of new formats of regional co-operation, which would bridge the Nordic countries and the Central and Eastern European nations. In this context, Lithuania's favourable geographical location and its experience of co-operation with neighbours and within the region will be a great asset.

Lithuania's strategic partnership with Poland and its partnership with Ukraine as well as the Nordic-Baltic sextet could also be expanded to include new areas of co-operation and new partners and to develop a proactive co-operation area.

I have a vision of Lithuania as a centre of regional co-operation, which is connected to Europe through transport, energy and infrastructure network.

Third, Lithuania will seek to strengthen its role in the region through the quality of its membership of the European Union and NATO and assistance to the Eastern European nations. Democratic Ukraine and its membership of the European Union and NATO is a strategic interest of Lithuania. We also hope that Belarus and Moldova will link their future with European co-operation.

Fourth, we are convinced that transatlantic partnership, which is indivisible and which rests on shared values, should be further developed and reinforced. Europe needs America, just like America needs Europe. This is well reflected in our economic relations and our common fight against new challenges. Lithuania takes a key interest in the development of a strong vital transatlantic co-operation and in NATO's adaptation to contemporary needs.

Fifth, development of friendly neighbour relations with Russia and close co-operation with the Kaliningrad region is yet another priority of our foreign policy. Lithuania is committed to take an active part in the EU-Russia and NATO-Russia dialogue. The growing trade between the European Union and Russia and expanding co-operation in the sectors of energy and economy makes all parties, in particular Lithuania, interested in the success of this

open dialogue of equal partners. I am convinced that closer partnership of Russia with the Western nations would open up new business opportunities and new possibilities for human contacts.

Sixth, with the accession to the European Union Lithuania has acquired broader possibilities for co-operation. The network of Union's partnership and free trade agreements allows Lithuania to broaden not only political but also commercial relations with faraway regions, where our country has been underrepresented until now.

On the other hand, Lithuania can offer its valuable experience of strengthening democracy and market economy and of developing co-operation with Euro-Atlantic structures. Our participation together with partners in a variety of projects which are carried out in the Caucasus and the Balkans is just one case in point.

Finally, it is important to add weight to our policy of aid and development assistance. I believe that our growing economy and improving social situation will allow for that.

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In less than a few years Lithuania will be in the first group of the new EU member states to join the euro zone and, we hope, the Schengen area, too. This will ensure a truly free movement and better business opportunities. These two factors coupled with the lowest tax rates in the euro zone and interconnected transport and energy systems, which Lithuania is determined to achieve, make an attractive vision of a dynamically developing region, which not only Lithuania but also the European Union needs.

LITHUANIAN FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES AND BACKGROUND 1992-1996

Povilas Gylys

My involvement in foreign policy occurred in the second stage of its development. In the first stage our country had to resort to semi-official channels of diplomacy. I have in mind the period after the declaration of independence on 11 March 1990, before the international recognition of Lithuania in the autumn of 1991. At that time we were not in the position of establishing diplomatic representations or exercising full diplomatic functions.

During my term of office as Foreign Minister I had to turn to totally different issues. We had to develop a conception of Lithuanian foreign policy, to maintain pragmatic relations with our key partners, avoiding dangerous tensions and conflicts, to join international organisations, continue the development of the diplomatic network, etc.

Withdrawal of Russian troops

The withdrawal of the Russian army was the top priority during my term of office. It was basically the essential prerequisite for the consolidation of our independence. A country is sovereign when it exercises full control over its territory. The presence of the Soviet army in Lithuania meant that the issue of sovereignty had not yet been fully resolved. Therefore, this issue dominated the agendas of all the political forces in Lithuania in 1993.

The process was evolving under complex pressure, which was both external and internal. On one hand, influential forces in Russia were making their best endeavours to prevent taking a final decision regarding the withdrawal of the former Soviet army. It should be admitted that there were moderate politicians in Russia who believed that the withdrawal was feasible, but under an appropriate legal framework.

This view was upheld by then Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrej Kozyrev whom I had to contact frequently in person and by phone. Our consultations made it clear that, despite his public statements demonstrating “tough line”, he supported a softer line, especially with regard to Lithuania. The same would apply to then Deputy Foreign Minister and the incumbent Foreign Minister of Russia Sergej Lavrov. I saw him as an open-minded cultured diplomat.

But the fact was that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia was also home to hard-line supporters, the most arduous of whom, in my opinion, was V. Churkin, who did everything within his power to stop the informal phone consultations with Kozyrev on the withdrawal issue.

Still, in spite of the pressure coming from the adverse powers, the overall political balance in Russia in principle was positive for Lithuania – as, fortunately, the key players supported the soft-line policy.

The Lithuanian political climate was heavily charged at that time. The government did not enjoy overall public support. It was also encouraged by the opposition. Moreover, the opposition achieved their representation in the delegation for negotiations with Russia. As a result, the negotiations were driven to the point where the Russian occupation claim prevailed over the withdrawal issue, following the logic of internal political wrangling rather than national interests.

The Russian side in the negotiations on the withdrawal issue had nearly agreed with the indemnification in relation to the damage inflicted on our army in 1940 as well as the environmental damage incurred by the country due to the deployment of the Soviet troops. However, the overall occupation-related claim was too much for Russia, besides, public opinion would have hardly accepted it.

Often as we raised the occupation claim issue – and it was right in terms of history, integrity and negotiation tactics – we could not afford to put at risk the agreement made back in autumn of 1992 regarding the set withdrawal date, which was 31 August 1993. Thus the issue of the withdrawal of the Soviet army was the top priority on the negotiations agenda.

It was finally resolved after consultations between the Lithuanian and Russian presidents, Algirdas Brazauskas and Boris Yeltsin, when it seemed that the whole negotiation process had already been derailed. It was an

enormous political and diplomatic achievement for our country: we were the first in the post-communist area to exercise full and unconditional control over our own territory.

Issue of Kaliningrad transit

There was still Kaliningrad Region – another “headache” or geopolitical legacy from the Soviet past to be dealt with. Having sorted out the withdrawal issue, the issue of transit, especially military transit, started dominating the relations between the two countries. Russia tended to incorporate it into all other issues, primarily trade and state border demarcation. Russian politicians and negotiators insisted on Lithuania introducing facilitated transit over its territory as a trade-off for a favourable trade status with Russia and other important matters.

Lithuania stood strong and did not assume commitments which might have curtailed its sovereign rights in the future. The extritorial corridor through Lithuania would have been a substantive violation of sovereignty rights.

Russia resorted to various tactics: it announced in the Polish press about the potential transit corridor crossing Polish territory, thus attempting to raise debate among Lithuanian authorities, and pressing to consider the issue in the context of the overall package of agreements between Russia and Lithuania.

Lithuania withstood all the trials. The negotiations halting, in the autumn of 1994, Lithuania claimed that it would regulate transit to and from Kaliningrad unilaterally as of 1 January 1995.

Russia had but to accept the statement. Even though national sovereignty is considered inviolable in legal and political terms without any reservations, our young negotiators had to work hard to avoid the potential infringement on Lithuanian sovereignty. It was a victory, again achieved under difficult international and domestic conditions. Our commercial ties with the East played a vital role in the economy and it was hindered by the lack of a favourable trade status with Russia. Similarly to the withdrawal issue, it was subject to the pressures of enormous internal political tensions.

Ten years have passed. The procedure established at that time has not changed as yet, though there have been different political forces in the Government. The relevance of the established procedure has proved worthy.

State border demarcation

Another challenge for Lithuanian diplomacy in 1992-1996 was state border demarcation. Though our common borders were more numerous in comparison to the other Baltic countries, we succeeded in solving this problem quickly. A land border agreement with Latvia was made in no time. Border issue tackling with Belarus was relatively smooth. It should be stated that President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko largely contributed to this. In the autumn of 1994 it was agreed that the president of Belarus would pay a visit to Lithuania the following March. Both states agreed that the agreement on common border demarcation had to be ready for signing by that time. Both parties honoured the schedule.

The Polish border was quite an issue for some time. Though both countries politically recognised the border *de facto*, the negotiators on both sides could not find a formula pleasing Poland and reflecting the legal situation after 1945. I remember how Polish Foreign Minister D. Rosati and I sorted the problem out in no time at all during one of our meetings. The border issue with Russia was more complicated.

The maritime boundary with Latvia was a hard nut for the negotiators to crack. It was special in the sense that we had to hold negotiations with a friendly neighbour, supposedly facilitating the process. Nevertheless, the negotiations were tough, primarily, due to the fact that Latvia covertly had signed an agreement regarding oil exploration in the Baltic Sea shelf. Such conduct, when Lithuania was advised after the fact, could be justified neither morally nor legally. It had a negative impact on the bilateral relations. Some Lithuanian politicians believed that friendly relations with Latvia were more important than a few square kilometres in the Baltic Sea. My view has always been different on this issue. I have always believed that a good relationship must be based on mutual trust, fairness and mutual benefit

Foreign economic policy

Foreign policy economisation was another issue to be handled. As an economist in foreign policy, I considered it my duty to achieve economic dimension strengthening. A small country usually resorts to export and import as major sources for the formation of its national product. We had to radically redirect the foreign trade balance, as during Soviet times actual foreign trade, including other countries from the Soviet block, but outside the USSR, constituted but a few per cent, to compare to over 90% with the other Soviet republics. The breakthrough in relation to export destination points happened in a few years time. We targeted global, primarily Western European markets.

As much as I remember, during my term in office, 283 agreements were concluded. The majority of them were economic. The most important, I would say, was the Free Trade Agreement with the EU signed in July 1994. This type of agreement was concluded with Central Europe, EFTA countries, Ukraine, etc.

There was a funny side to it as well. I remember a serious business organisation criticising us, diplomats, in spring 1994, for the delay in signing the free trade agreement with the Council of Europe.

The conclusion of the above-mentioned agreements and the introduction of a favourable trade regime with Russia provided our business with better tools for acting abroad and opened up better opportunities for economic growth.

Integration into the West

The paradigm of the integration into Western organisations underwent gradual development. There was time when the topic of integration into Western organisations, especially NATO, was avoided equally by the left as well as the right wing. This was preconditioned by the general political background. The withdrawal of the Russian troops from Lithuania in autumn 1993 encouraged the discussions on this issue.

The background for discussions was not as easy as it might seem to current political analysts. First and foremost, in addressing such an issue it is important not to confuse the goal and the means. The goal of our integration into the

Western structures was national security and public welfare. Integration is but a means to achieve the goal.

On the other hand, it was not only us that had to face the issue of integration. Western political consciousness also had difficulties in coping with stereotypes and inert thinking. For instance, in spring 1993, when visiting the headquarters of an important international organisation and seeing the top officials, I was shocked to notice on the office wall an outdated map detailing the USSR, and certainly with no mention of independent Lithuania. It had been over three years since the declaration of our independence and two years since international recognition. I thought to myself: if a large well-funded organisation could not change the map in this time, how much longer could the change in thinking take?

In Lithuania, the majority of politicians took their decision regarding integration into the Western security structures right after the Russian Duma elections in December 1993, when Vladimir Zhirinovskij, having repeatedly insisted that the Vilnius and Klaipeda regions were not part of Lithuania, got a quarter of the votes. Added to the influence of the Russian communist block, which persistently stuck to the idea of the Soviet Union, the picture of future co-operation with this country looked predictable. Therefore, considering the context, the most logical solution for Lithuania was integration into the democratic Western structures.

However, in taking this decision it had to be first realised that it entailed both hard and soft security welfare guarantees. NATO addresses hard guarantee issues, while the EU and the good neighbour relations were to be understood as a precondition for soft, more subtle, and less visible and perceived security. The co-ordination of these two directions could ensure sustainable, all-inclusive and long-term security.

Lithuanian image

Now, I would like to touch upon the issue of country image formation. Initially it was not a top priority. On one hand, there were seemingly more important issues at stake; on the other hand, our country had enough publicity throughout global media. Nevertheless, when the critical situation was resolved, Lithuania's name was gradually phasing out of the public media,

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at the same time, the approach to the country was becoming more critical. At that time it was becoming popular to compare countries in the same region based on their political and economic achievements. The Baltic countries were no exception either.

Estonia held a clearly competitive position with regard to its neighbours. Lithuania and Latvia, meanwhile, were dubious as to which position to assume – competitive or friendly – and how to react to Estonian challenges.

It was not only and not so much the statements of Estonian leaders that they were the best in the Baltic region, as their arrogant declarations with regard to the other two countries in the region. By doing so, they breached the principles of fair competition and political marketing: you can say that your washing powder is the best in the world, but you are not allowed to name the rivals. We tried to improve the situation in every way possible. This experience made us give more thought to the idea of closer co-operation with Poland.

In conclusion, I would like to express my delight at the achievements and growing resources of our diplomacy. It is true that the young Lithuanian diplomacy has done a lot. However, it is worth noting that free, open and self-critical discussion about national interest implementation opportunities in foreign policy might be the best way, preventing us from possible diplomatic dead ends.

LITHUANIAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE IN EXILE FROM 1940-1991

Laurynas Jonušauskas

Lithuanian diplomatic service in exile is associated with the diplomats in service of the state, which was occupied and annexed by another country and thereby erased from the world political map. The diplomats in the diplomatic service of independent Lithuania worked and lived in exile from 1940 till 1991, i.e. for fifty years, driven by a feeling of great responsibility, hope and belief in the restoration of the Lithuanian state.

The survival of the diplomatic service of Lithuania in 1940 was determined by the idiosyncrasy of its activities and the stance that the largest states took towards the occupation of Lithuania. Unfortunately, the whole structure of the diplomatic service did not survive, only some embassies and their diplomatic corps. The fate of Lithuanian embassies depended on the predominant political views regarding the Baltic States in the residing country and its relations with the Soviet Union.

At the beginning of diplomacy in exile, the Lithuanian diplomatic service consisted of five official embassies – in London, Washington, Buenos Aires, the Vatican and Bern, one diplomatic representation in France, which was tolerated by the local government, as well as two general consulates and three consulates. When the independence of Lithuania was restored, there were three official embassies remaining – in Washington, London and the Holy See, an unofficially acting representative of Lithuania in France, one general consulate in New York and four general honorary consulates – in Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto and Caracas. Only a few diplomats who worked in diplomatic service before the loss of independence were lucky enough to see the restoration of Lithuanian statehood: Stasys Antanas Bačkis, Vincas Balickas and Anicetas Simutis were the only diplomats who remained in service throughout the entire occupation period.

Thus the diplomatic corps that retained diplomatic immunity and the embassies that continued functioning legally in the West created the basis

for not only continuing diplomatic activities under the conditions of exodus but also raising the issue of independence of Lithuania on the international scene.

Begin of the exile

As early as 1939, Lithuanian diplomats called the attention of the President, the Government and other state officials to the threat of the Soviet Union. Lithuanian diplomats working abroad prepared a joint memorandum, which, besides recommendations how to strengthen the state, discussed the issues of transferring the government abroad in case of the Soviet occupation and establishing a fund for financing political activities abroad.

However, to achieve the recognition of a government in exile in the Western states Lithuania would have had to be considered to be at war with a state with which the country receiving the Lithuanian government in exile was also at war. Doubtful about the likelihood of the retreat of the Government abroad and its recognition, Lithuanian ambassadors proposed to amend the 1938 Constitution, so that the substitution of the President would neither depend on elections nor on the Prime Minister's will. Should the government or a body vested with its powers fail to retreat abroad, the envoys proposed to appoint beforehand a person who would be authorised to co-ordinate the activities of Lithuanian diplomatic service abroad.

The Government of Lithuania did not look at the memorandum seriously and the proposal of diplomats was not implemented. In 1941, the ambassador in London Bronius Kazys Balutis wrote to the President in reference to the unimplemented memorandum that "as a result, we were left practically without any resources for further fight and, what is worse, ragged and scattered, on our own, muddling through as best each could."

As the project of the Lithuanian ambassadors was not implemented, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys, authorised by the President of Lithuania, informed the diplomats by telegram that, in case of a catastrophe for the state of Lithuania, the chief of diplomacy would be Stasys Lozoraitis. The function of the chief of diplomacy was to coordinate the remaining diplomatic service in exile, as well as appoint diplomats to new positions and confer diplomatic ranks to them.

When the “People Parliament” voted for the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union on July 21, 1940, Lithuanian envoys sent a protest note to most governments to which they were accredited.

The retaliation of Soviet Lithuania against the diplomatic service of independent Lithuania remaining abroad began very soon. The diplomats were deprived of Lithuanian citizenship, banned from returning to their homeland and their property was confiscated. On the basis of the decision of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union to accept the Lithuanian Socialist Soviet Republic to the Soviet Union, the activities of all Lithuanian embassies and consulates were terminated on August 8, 1940.

Lithuania lost its embassies in the countries occupied by the Soviet Union. After the pressure of the Soviet Union, most Western European countries – Sweden, Germany, France and Italy, transferred Lithuanian embassies to the Soviet Union. Although Switzerland did not recognise the occupation of Lithuania, it nevertheless terminated diplomatic relations with the embassy of Lithuania.

Attempts to create government in exile

Diplomats who represented independent Lithuania abroad were no longer even *de jure* associated with the formally created Soviet Lithuania. The goal of restoring the state prompted diplomats to set forth the guidelines for their further activities. According to Balutis, forming a government in exile and obtaining its recognition had to be the *alpha and omega* of the activities of the diplomats. During their first meetings in Rome and Bern, the diplomats formed a prototype of government in exile – the National Committee.

Shortly afterwards, in one of the meetings of the diplomats, President of Lithuania Antanas Smetona, before leaving Europe, signed the fictitious “Kybartai Acts” according which Lozoraitis became the Prime Minister and the acting President of the Republic of Lithuania. However, the so-called “Kybartai Acts” were essentially a transient event, when in autumn 1945 Lozoraitis sent letters to the heads of the USA, Great Britain and France, signing as Prime Minister and the acting President of the Republic of Lithuania. According to Lozoraitis himself, the appearance of the “Kybartai Acts” was the wish “to give certain emphasis to the continuity of our sovereign

power for foreigners; as far as the position of our own people – both official and private persons – is concerned, it would remain as it was, all the more so since I myself don't have the power to change it.”

At that time, it was important for the representatives of Lithuania to show to the international community or, more exactly, to the allies, should they begin to look for manifestations of the continuity of the Lithuanian government among the political strata of emigrants, that there was such continuity after the death of President Smetona. However, the leaders of the great powers made no response.

The National Committee did not even start functioning due to the war in Europe, which impeded communication between diplomats residing in different countries. Another reason for the inactivity of the National Committee has been the differences among the ambassadors themselves and their political conceptions and assessment of the situation because not everyone endorsed the active German role backed by Kazys Škirpa.

At the beginning, Lithuanian diplomats harboured the hopes about the restoration of Lithuania with the war between Germany and the Soviet Union. However, it became apparent that the restoration of independent Lithuania was not included in German plans, which was also shown by the status of the Provisional Government and its fate. After losing hopes restoring the state with the help of Germany, diplomats in the West started searching for a state that would allow the formation of a government in exile and recognise it. No state was inclined to do this. Thus the Lithuanian diplomatic service itself no longer kept the illusions about forming a political entity that would be officially recognised by at least one state.

Gradually, the actions of the diplomatic service acquired a character of consistent work, focusing on the essential issues of the survival of the diplomatic service and the strengthening of diplomatic positions. The constant raising of the issue of Lithuania on the international scene was an inseparable part of diplomatic representation, but the annexation of Lithuania, as well as of Latvia and Estonia, was not the main subject of international debates.

Activities in 1960s and 1970s

In the 1960s and 70s the activities of the diplomatic service of Lithuania became symbolic due to the elderly age of its corps and the thinning out of their ranks. The activities of the diplomatic service of Lithuania waned also due to external factors which had a rather severe impact on the diplomatic service, especially in the states of South America.

The South American region was very dependent on the developments in the international politics, much more than Western Europe, which could afford more sophisticated politics. South American states did not pose significant difficulties for the speedy performance of the diplomatic procedures, which a new representative undergoes in the usual diplomatic practice in order to engage in diplomatic activities. However, whenever the foreign policy line of these countries changed or relations with the Soviet Union intensified, it did not take much time to terminate the activities of a diplomatic residence and its corps. This happened in the honorary consulate of Lithuania in Columbia and the embassy in Brazil. The embassy of Lithuania in Montevideo was forced to terminate its activities after the death of the last Lithuanian diplomat who entered the diplomatic service of Lithuania before 1940.

Difficulties staying abroad – the last decade in exile

One of the greatest problems for the diplomatic service of Lithuania was that its members could not be replaced after their death. The principal position of the US State Department, which controlled the finances of the diplomatic service of Lithuania, was that only those diplomats who worked in the diplomatic service of Lithuania before 1940 could be members of the diplomatic service and receive financial support. The diplomatic service could support itself only with the so-called frozen funds of Lithuania, but it could not dispose of it freely without permission from the US State Department. The

first signs telling that the activities of the diplomatic service in exile should be reconsidered became apparent after the many deaths of the ambassadors: the former envoy in Switzerland, one of the deputy chiefs of diplomacy Jurgis Šaulys, the envoy in the USA Povilas Žadeikis, the envoy in Montevideo Kazys Graužinis, the envoy in London Balutis, the envoy at the Holy See Stasys Girdvainis, the general honorary consul in Toronto

Vytautas Jonas Gylys and the plenipotentiary in the Scandinavian countries Ignas Šeinius. The question was – what is the future of the diplomatic service of Lithuania.

Naturally, everyone hoped that the occupation of Lithuania would not last so long and that members of the diplomatic service of Lithuania would see the independence of Lithuania. However, the continuity of the diplomatic service in exile had to be preserved using only the diplomatic personnel available at that time. The funds of the diplomatic service of Lithuania were also diminishing. So, the restructuring of the Lithuanian diplomatic corps was implemented.

The former secretary of Lithuanian Embassy in Bern Albertas Gerutis became the representative of the chief of the Lithuanian diplomacy in Bern and its unofficial representative in Bonn at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, the former envoy of Lithuania in Paris Bačkis moved to live and work in the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington; Jurgis Baltrušaitis became the Lithuanian representative in Paris, whereas the former adviser of the Lithuanian Embassy in London Balickas became its head. The castling of the diplomats stabilised its corps for some time but the issue of funds and personnel of the diplomatic service retained its pertinence.

In 1980, not without the efforts of Lithuanian emigrant organisations in the USA, the State Department agreed to accept to the diplomatic service of Lithuania persons who were not working in the diplomatic service of Lithuania before 1940. The issue of funding was also resolved when the much wealthier former Latvian diplomatic service, through the mediation of the US State Department, agreed to finance Lithuanian diplomats. At the time when this issue was resolved, there was only \$867 remaining in the account of the diplomatic service of Lithuania.

The resolution of the issues of financing and personnel of the diplomatic service of Lithuania laid the foundation for its stability. When Lozoraitis died in 1983, envoy of Lithuania in Washington Bačkis succeeded him in the position of the chief of diplomacy.

After the 1990

When the independence of Lithuania was declared on March 11 1990, the Lithuanian diplomats working abroad welcomed the news exultantly – this was the goal they had sought for such a long time. However, they felt a moral obligation not to rush ending their mission and transferring the symbolic entitlements to the ministry of foreign affairs of the young and still fragile state. Bačkis told this to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Algirdas Saudargas when the latter was in Paris at the end of 1990. This circumspection was also conditioned by the fact that the international community did not hurry to recognise the statehood of Lithuania, not to mention that this was not done by the Soviet Union either.

States around the world began recognising the independence of Lithuania only after the putsch in Russia in August 1991. As on 6 September 1991 the Soviet Union recognised the state of Lithuania, immediately at the same day Bačkis sent a letter to Saudargas stating that his mission as the chief of the diplomacy of Lithuania was over.

The retirement of Bačkis from the position ended the difficult, fifty-year period period of the diplomatic service of Lithuania in exile. The great efforts of the diplomats did not allow entirely erasing Lithuania from the world political map in the consciousness of the international community.

SHARED DESTINY: THE LITHUANIAN STATE AND DIPLOMACY BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Algimantas Kasparavičius

I.

If we accept the premise that the aim of the science of history is to propel the national collective consciousness and provide opportunities for individuals and societies to learn from their past, then, seemingly, we will be able to arrive at the conclusion that various historical anniversaries may be doubly useful. On the one side – socially, because the remarks or criticisms made by historians with regard to historical past achieve a wider resonance in the society in the context of commemoration of “significant dates”, and thus the social function of history acquires more space for expression. On the other side – historiographically, because the discourse of a particular historical celebration provides a fair chance to test the durability of the already existing historiographic concepts and myths or to unearth from the labyrinths of collective memory to the public not only the noble feats and wise actions but also the much darker pages of history.

II.

The political development of Europe between the two world wars was essentially conditioned by several key factors. First – the political system, which formed as the result of the decisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty, with the League of Nations at the front. Second – the geopolitical-economic interests and the cultural-ideological priorities of the large states. Third – the ability or inability of the medium or small European states to assist the League of Nations and the large states in maintaining stability and peace. It seems that, looking at the political history of inter-war Europe retrospectively, all three factors of international development mentioned above were far from unambiguously positive and oriented towards the preservation of the *status quo* in the old continent. Therefore, for two decades on end, Europe lived as

if on top of a political volcano – haunted by the global international crisis or even the foreboding of a new war¹.

The noble and publicly declared goals of the League of Nations to preserve peace in Europe and in the world in many cases, unfortunately, lacked effective means and could not be successfully realised. Therefore, the political superiority of the League of Nations in international affairs became nominal, rather than real, from the very first year of its existence. It is not a secret that the decisions of this international institution, which was the most influential and authoritative at that time, usually depended not on the considerations of law or justice but on the interests of the large states that dominated it at one time or another or on their mutual balance of power.² Therefore, it is not surprising that, as the years passed, the international authority of the League of Nations was noticeably and uncontrollably declining. The first to become disenchanted with the League of Nations were the small and medium states which had some international problems and experienced the partiality of this international institution. Lithuania was also among the first in this regard, when, as a result of unsuccessful arbitration by the League of Nations in the territorial dispute between Lithuania and Poland, the historical capital of the Lithuanians – Vilnius – went to the latter.

On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the creation of a stable and peaceful Europe was also impeded by the divergent interests of the large states, their mutual disagreements and differing views of the political future. From the days of the Paris Peace Conference to the mid-thirties France was relentlessly seeking the ways and the means to guarantee the stability of the Versailles system, and thereby consolidate its security and political domination in the continental Europe. At the same time, Great Britain was acting in essentially the opposite direction. The British were convinced that the conservation of the Treaty of Versailles and the preservation of peace in Europe were two irreconcilable things. Therefore, London was consistently

¹ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2001).

² Robert Dell, *The Geneva Racket, 1920 – 1939* (London: Robert Hale Limited, WC).

seeking ways how to reform the Versailles system peacefully and to create a more advantageous environment in Europe for its interests and the preservation of peace.³ The other two physically largest European states – Weimar Germany and Bolshevik Russia (later – the Soviet Union), which became political outsiders in the aftermath of the Great War, essentially sought to demolish the Versailles peace system, which was unfavourable to them, and laboured at this task persistently, often even concordantly.⁴ Berlin and Moscow were unwilling to put up with the role of secondary states in Europe imposed on them after the Great War and harboured revanchist or imperialist plans. Weimar Germany planned to free itself from the military-political sanctions imposed on it by the Versailles treaty, dreamed about the *Anschluss* of Austria, and had large territorial claims against Poland and Czechoslovakia, and somewhat smaller against Lithuania and Denmark.⁵

The Soviet Union, the fictitious successor to the rights of the Russian Empire, also schemed to reclaim or even expand the lands ruled by the tsarist empire. The Kremlin had territorial claims against Poland and Romania, and treated the establishment of independent Baltic States as a misunderstanding and a symptom of its temporary political and economic weakness. The dictator of Bolshevik Russia Joseph Stalin, who was almost impeccably geopolitically trailing in the footsteps of tsarist Russia, fostered plans for “reclaiming” the boundaries of tsarist Russia long before the beginning of the Second World War. In other words, he planned to “recover” Finland, the Baltic States,

³ Arthur H. Furnia, *The Diplomacy of Appeasement: Anglo-French Relations and the Prelude to World War II, 1931 – 1938* (The University Press of Washington, D.C., 1960); Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler. British Politics and British Policy, 1933 – 1940* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977); Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: A Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster, 1995).

⁴ Kurt Rosenbaum, *Community of Fate. German – Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1922 – 1928* (Syracuse University Press), 220 – 241.

⁵ G. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany. A diplomatic revolution in Europe, 1933 – 1936* (New Jersey, 1994), 14 – 15; K. Hindebrand, *Das vergangene Reich. Deutsche Außenpolitik von Bismark bis Hitler, 1871 – 1945* (Stuttgart, 1996), 460.

Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia.⁶ The declaration of the people's commissioner for foreign affairs of the USSR Viacheslav Molotov to the Estonian delegation in Moscow on September 25, 1939 also partially confirms the hatching of the imperial designs of the rulers of the Bolshevik Russia. As soon as the Estonian-Soviet negotiations on the formation of a mutual assistance pact began, Molotov immediately demanded the creation of military stations of the USSR in Estonia and lashed out at the Estonian delegation: "Twenty years ago we were plunged into that Finnish slough, and for a long time, the USSR was confined to a small part of the Finnish gulf. Do you really believe that it can remain this way forever? At that time, the Soviet Union was powerless, and now it has grown economically, militarily and culturally. The Soviet Union is a great power now whose interests must be reckoned. I'll tell you, the Soviet Union needs to expand its security system and needs access to the Baltic Sea for this. [...] I beseech you, do not make us use force against Estonia."⁷ We will run ahead slightly in noting that this cynical sincerity of Molotov "persuaded" the Estonian delegation, and at the end of September 1939 Estonia accepted the Soviet protectorate, the first among the three Baltic States. In this manner, the Soviets did not have to use force in breaking down the collective neutrality front of the Baltic States and in opening the way for the creation of Red Army bases in the region.

It is interesting to observe that the Bolsheviks of Russia were apparently not lonely in fostering annexation plans against the Baltic States. Examinations of certain historical documents provide grounds for suspecting that the white Russian emigration virtually encouraged or even morally supported the Soviets to annex the Baltic States. For example, in spring 1939 Estonian envoy in France Otto Strandman found out through diplomatic channels that "<...> the old Russians [the emigrants], even such democrats as Kerensky*, support the agreement between Russia and Germany and consider the Baltic States as only a transient phenomenon. They must necessarily be incorporated into

⁶ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925 – 1950* (Boston, 1967), 519 – 520.

⁷ От пакта Молотова–Риббентропа до договора о базах. Документы и матерялы, т. 2 (Таллин, 1990), 137 – 138.

* Reference is made to Aleksandr Kerensky.

Russia”⁸. Thus, it may not be excluded that this or the similar attitude of the white Russian emigration was also in a way stimulating Soviet ambitions to realise the “geopolitical testament” of their ideological enemies and re-establish the borders of the former empire.

On the other hand, the third factor of European international politics, i.e. small and medium states which, had they united their forces, could have eventually become rather considerable and influential designers and participants of international politics, did not demonstrate enough political maturity or moral politics in the interwar period either.

The exaggerated nationalistic ideology and rhetoric, the radically interpreted right of self-determination and the striving for the maximum realisation of their interests determined that the states which were newly established after the Great War entered into conflicts with each other, in some cases, more fiercely than the old players of Europe – the large countries. One of the main architects of the Treaty of Versailles and the advocate of small nations, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, noticing the increasing outbursts of irrational conflicts between the new states, once remarked that these small countries are quickly becoming more vicious and more veritable “imperialists” than the great powers. Another British politician, Conservative leader Winston Churchill, gave an even more vivid characterisation of the situation after the Great War. According to Churchill, after the giants retired from the European political scene, the times and the quarrels of political pygmies began.⁹ Of course, the British conservative’s description may have been rhetorically exaggerated but it did not stray too far from the essence of the problem. During the entire interwar period, from June 28, 1919 when the Treaty of Versailles was signed, until August 31, 1939 – the last day of peace, Europe was almost constantly plagued by discords or conflicts. Perhaps the most characteristic example of this political destructiveness is the territorial conflict between Lithuania and Poland over Vilnius, which

⁸ Confidential report of 8 May 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P. Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys// Lithuanian Central State Archives (hereinafter – LCSA), f. 648, ap. 1, b. 30, l. 67.

⁹ Винстон Черчилль, *Мировой кризис* (Москва, 1932), 10.

was smouldering incessantly for the entire period and ultimately made a substantial contribution to the ruin of these states at the very beginning of the Second World War.

III.

The noticeably unbalanced political discourse in interwar Europe exerted a negative influence on Lithuania as well. It shaped the problematic geopolitical reasoning and faulty diplomatic practices. During the entire interwar period Lithuania was constantly feeling the destructive policies of Germany in Klaipėda, and because of Soviet Russia's "assistance" to Lithuania the problem of Vilnius and the conflict between Lithuania and Poland essentially became almost insoluble politically, nonetheless, Lithuanian foreign policy was for a long time oriented precisely towards these two states – professed allies. Seeking a successful resolution of the territorial conflict with Poland and to recover the historical capital, Lithuanian politicians and diplomats were vesting high hopes in their eastern neighbour. There was the belief in Kaunas during the whole interwar period that the historical capital could not be regained unless Russia was favourably disposed to Lithuania. For example, Lithuania's envoy to Moscow poet Jurgis Baltrušaitis was trying to persuade the government in early 1921 that direct negotiations and the search for a compromise with Poland were not necessary because the Polish state would be simply wiped out by Bolshevik Russia in the nearest future. As these forecasts proved to be wrong, the diplomat did not grow dispirited, and, at the end of the same year, further admonished the steersmen of the country's foreign policy "to avoid even the most distant co-operation and <...> not to consort with the Poles in any way" because this would have simply catastrophic consequences to Lithuanian statehood.¹⁰ According to the diplomat, the best policy for Lithuania was to stay outside the political processes and wait. "I believe and hope that the near future will show that self-isolation is the only fit political stance. The Lithuanian issue is an integral part of the common European issue and the confrontation between the Lithuanians and the Poles

¹⁰ Confidential report of 27 November 1921 of the *Chargé d'Affaires* of Lithuania in RSFSR J. Baltrušaitis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr J. Purickis// LCSA, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 108, l. 31.

is just a tiny part of the great confrontation between the East and the West. <...> The most important thing now is to show an unfaltering resolve and a firm position,” wrote Baltrušaitis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, priest Dr Vladas Jurgutis.

The content of Baltrušaitis' reports to Kaunas shows that the diplomat was tending to substantially exaggerate the geopolitical factor of the eastern neighbour. For example, in January 1922, he regularly lectured the Director of the East Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andrius Lisauskis: “The Russians have become an important factor in Europe. Many things depend on them. They are conducting secret negotiations with the English and the Germans. They are watching who their friend is and who isn't. What we do for their benefit will not be a concession but a gain because they are on our side and the future will show that they are very important for us.”¹¹ To achieve friendly relations with Russia, this diplomat from Kaunas was even prepared to sacrifice Lithuania's geopolitical partnership with its northern neighbours. In Baltrušaitis' eyes, the political future of Latvia and Estonia was certainly “short and constricted”, *a priori* determined by Russia's geopolitical interest in repossessing the strategic ports in the Baltic Sea. Therefore, any closer political co-operation with its northern neighbours was a geopolitically risky matter for Lithuania.¹²

It would be a mistake to think that the geopolitical thinking of poet-diplomat Baltrušaitis was peculiar or at great odds with the predominant moods of the contemporaneous Lithuanian establishment. As becomes evident from diplomatic documents, the position of the envoy was more or less endorsed by some other famous Lithuanian figures as well. For example, in spring 1921, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Juozas Purickis assigned Baltrušaitis to ram the strategic partnership of the Baltic States, Finland and

¹¹ Confidential report of 12 January 1922 of the *Chargé d'Affaires* of Lithuania in RSFSR J. Baltrušaitis to the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs A. Lisauskis// *Ibid.*, b. 300, l. 151.

¹² Confidential report of 27 March 1921 of the *Chargé d'Affaires* of Lithuania in RSFSR J. Baltrušaitis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr V. Jurgutis// *Ibid.*, l. 113.

Poland by the Russian political factor. The minister wrote in a confidential instruction to the envoy in Moscow: “<...> could not Chicherin* issue a note for the Baltic States – Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – which would declare that Russia will consider an alliance of these states as a hostile act which would prompt corresponding actions on its part. This note would prevent the union of the Baltic States with Poland which is presently being much promoted and which is directed against Russia. <...> The Russians must help us obstruct the union of the Baltic States with Poland.”¹³ Christian Democrat Jurgutis, who replaced Purickis as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, non-partisan Prime Minister Ernestas Galvanauskas, the leaders of the Populists Mykolas Sleževičius and Dr Kazys Grinius, as well as the leaders of the Nationalists Antanas Smetona and Prof. Augustinas Voldemaras all tended to resort to the geopolitical factor of Russia in 1921-1923 – years that were crucial to the development of relations between Lithuania and Poland and the dilemma of Vilnius.¹⁴

Despite all of Lithuania’s efforts, there was no success in obtaining political benefits from Bolshevik Russia (from 1922 – the USSR). A noticeable disillusionment with the political co-operation with Russia first took place in the spring of 1923, when the conference of ambassadors adopted the well-known resolution regarding the eastern borders of Poland. After the decision of the Conference of ambassadors of March 15, 1923 to hand Vilnius to Poland, the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bronius Kazys Balutis described the moods in the temporary capital as dismal: “Russia offered no assistance to us in this critical moment. <...> Those who were expecting support from Russia on the Polish-Lithuanian border issue must be very disappointed, especially since the Russians were

* Reference is made to the then People’s Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Russia Georgy Chicherin.

¹³ Confidential instruction of 2 May 1921 of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr J. Purickis to the *Chargé d’Affaires* of Lithuania in RSFSR J. Baltrušaitis// *Ibid.*, b. 110, l. 88.

¹⁴ A. Kasparavičius, “Don Kichotas prieš Prometeją. Tarpukario lietuvių – lenkų iracionalioji diplomatija”// *Darbai ir Dienos*, Vol. 30 (2002), 52-55.

inveigling us to resort to stern tactics. The liking for the Russians has now appreciably diminished in Lithuania.”¹⁵

However, Lithuania’s disenchantment with its eastern neighbour did not last long. At the end of 1925, the minutes of the country’s foreign policy programme, prepared by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and sanctioned by the government, stated that the main foreign policy goal was to regain Vilnius and “<...> the centre of gravity for the action in liberating Vilnius rests not in the Concord group but in the Russian-German block.”¹⁶ Thus, the unresolved problem of Vilnius once again determined the continuation of political orientation to Russia (the USSR) and Germany. At the end of September 1926, a non-aggression pact was signed in Moscow between Lithuania and the USSR under rather controversial circumstances. This move by Lithuania was significantly at odds with the policies of the great Western democracies and provoked substantial discontent on their part. The foreign policy of Lithuania would have certainly received more reproofs by the Western democracies in the autumn of 1926 had they also had knowledge about the secret agreement between Lithuania and the USSR – the so-called *Gentlemen’s Agreement* – which was essentially directed against Poland and the Baltic States, as well as eventually against the British-French efforts to isolate Bolshevik Russia from Germany and Western Europe.¹⁷

To forbear from going into more detail and the long-term historical peripeteia, the quintessence of the political relations between Lithuania and the Soviet Union could perhaps best be conveyed by the summing-up

¹⁵ Confidential report of 24 March 1923 of the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs B.K.Balutis to the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the USSR J.Baltrušaitis// LCSA, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 374, l. 296.

¹⁶ Action Programme prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania “General Principles for the Resolution of the Problem of Vilnius”// *Ibid.*, b. 711, l. 257.

¹⁷ Confidential report of 3 March 1923 of the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs B.K.Balutis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Valdemaras Čarneckis about the conversation with the official of the Great Britain’s *Foreign Office* R.W Leeper// *Ibid.*, b. 582, l. 8.

offered by the Lithuanian diplomats themselves. For example, in late 1939, one of the most experienced and gifted interwar diplomats Balutis “sincerely” admitted to the USSR envoy in London Ivan Maisky that Lithuania trusted Russia during the entire interwar period and essentially conducted politics favourable to it: “We may recall, say, the years of 1919 and 1920, when you were going through your worst, and the subsequent years. Remember, when the intention was to cut you off from the world by surrounding you with the famous Clemenceau** ‘sanitary cordon’. You know very well that everyone from the Arctic to the Black Sea favoured such a plan. If the plan did not actually succeed it is only because it lacked in the most important place in the chain *tolko odnogo zvena* [only one link – in Russian]. Lithuania disagreed even under pressure. Later, the Treaty of Rapallo came, when it was again attempted to tighten the frontier of that ‘sanitary cordon’, so as to cut off the Soviets from Germany. Again we disagreed. You are very well aware that in those times the USSR was not in high fashion and Lithuania had to suffer a lot for its position. We were decried as Bolsheviks everywhere, Moscow’s servants and stooges, and everywhere on the international stage we were regarded as a kind of outpost of the USSR, from which we also suffered more than once. The same Vilnius issue could have perhaps been disentangled slightly differently at that time... We disregarded all of this and maintained our sincerely favourable policy line throughout.”¹⁸

True, it must be emphasised that the political “merits” of Lithuania to Russia were listed at that time by Balutis without any pride but in considerable distress and disappointment, reproaching Moscow for its aggressive and cynical position towards Lithuania in the autumn of 1939. The Lithuanian diplomat ended the dialogue with the Soviet envoy by concluding sadly that in return for its long year of friendliness Russia “rewarded” Lithuania by giving back only a third of the severely ravaged Vilnius region and simultaneously imposing the bases of the Red Army, which *de facto* placed the independent

** Reference is made to the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau.

¹⁸ Confidential report No.136 “Conversation with Maisky” of 30 November 1939 of the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Great Britain B.K.Balutis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys // *Ibid.*, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 9, l. 268.

state under the Soviet protectorate. As if summing up the unfulfilled hopes of the country and the political-diplomatic defeat suffered, the Lithuanian diplomat declared to the representative of the Kremlin: “The stationing of garrisons <...> violates the sovereignty of our country and <...> is dangerous for us. <...> By stationing garrisons you treated us even more fiercely than our Latvian and Estonian neighbours because they have their bases in the periphery of their countries, whereas in our case you situated garrisons all around the country. Most Lithuanians expected that Lithuania would be treated better than Latvia and Estonia and no one believed that it would be treated more fiercely.”¹⁹

Two moments must be noted in retrospective assessment of this “sincere” statement of Balutis to Maisky. On one hand, there is little doubt that the reprimands by the Kaunas’ envoy for the Kremlin’s policies were well-founded. On the other hand, it is obvious that the “awakening” of Lithuanian diplomacy with regard to relations with the big eastern neighbour came much too late. The Kremlin’s politics were actually never favourable to Lithuania. The Soviets were usually merely simulating “assistance” to Lithuania. At a time when Lithuania was constantly expecting Moscow’s diplomatic support in fighting for Vilnius on the international stage, and when, in order to reclaim the historical capital, it was making risky adjustments in its foreign policy in Russia’s favour, Moscow was resolved on what to do with Vilnius: to “concede to Poland” for a certain political price or to keep it by declaring Vilnius a Belarusian city. Soviet diplomacy was not even actually considering “returning” Vilnius to the Republic of Lithuania.²⁰ The USSR’s position on this issue was particularly clearly stated in the mid-twenties by the plenipotentiary of the USSR in Lithuania Ivan Lorenz. He wrote: “As concerns the issue of Vilnius, we have taken note of two things: a) our final course and aims; b) our tactical line at the present moment. Our final aims,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I. 268-269.

²⁰ Confidential report No.75 of 3 September 1924 of the Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Lithuania I. Lorenz to the Board Member of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (hereinafter – PCFA) of the USSR Viktor Kopp// The Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – FPARF), f. 04 ap. 27, apl. 183, b. 67, l. 14.

of course, were always clear but only during the last one and a half years did we manage to make progress towards their fulfilment <...>, when the final events and shows turned the BSSR into an even more powerful magnet influencing the neighbouring territories. <...> Despite the fact that I raised the issue of Vilnius as a Belarusian issue in April 1923 <...> and despite the immense work that we have done through our national politics in the past years in preparing for bringing up the issue of Vilnius in the future, I still think that it would be too risky to raise the issue of Vilnius as a Belarusian issue in the negotiations with Poland at this moment. Poland will not enter such discussions at this point. Lithuania is also viewing the Belarusian movement in the Vilnius region with suspicion. Therefore, I believe that the right course would be to continue the anti-Polish policies in the Vilnius region, without committing ourselves too much to Lithuania but in such a way so that we do not create untimely suspicions on behalf of Lithuania.”²¹

These Machiavellian politics and diplomatic tactics of the USSR towards Vilnius and Lithuania were essentially continued without more significant adjustments until the very end of the thirties.²² Therefore, it would seem that the statements which occasionally make an appearance in Lithuanian historiography, to the effect that Lithuania’s pro-Russian “<...> foreign policy orientation was not a historical mistake because the nation achieved its supreme goal of regaining Vilnius,”²³ are ill-founded, historically incorrect and create a rather distorted historical image in the society. That the USSR “returned” Vilnius to Lithuania in October 1939 was not determined so much by the pro-Russian foreign policy orientation of Lithuania in the preceding years but by the specific configuration of the international situation in the wake of the Second World War, which opened an opportunity for the Kremlin to incorporate the

²¹ Confidential report No. 84 of 24 September 1924 of the Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Lithuania I. Lorenz to the Board Member of the PCFA V.Kopp// *Ibid.*, l. 59 – 62.

²² С.З. Случ, Польша в политике Советского Союза, 1938 – 1939// *Советско–Польские отношения в политических условиях Европы 30–х годов XX столетия* (Москва: «Наука», 2001), 160.

²³ Liudas Truska, “Kas traukė į Rusijos glėbį? Geopolitinė Lietuvos orientacija 1918 – 1940 metais”// *Darbai ir Dienos*, Vol.30 (2002), 45.

whole of Lithuania to the empire, and not just the historical capital of the Lithuanians. The “merits” of the Lithuanian foreign policy of the preceding years did not have any role here for Moscow and the leadership of the Kremlin did not cherish any political sympathies for the Lithuanians on account of this.²⁴ As the analysis of historical documents reveals, in the negotiations with Lithuania in October 1939 the Kremlin’s diplomacy considered the “returning of Vilnius” not as the fulfilment of its previous juridical-political obligations but only as a certain instrument for moral blackmailing aimed at breaking down the political will of the Lithuanians and imposing the Soviet protectorate on Lithuania.²⁵ Unfortunately, the Lithuanian diplomats accepted such rules of the game. Juridical arguments were almost not used in the negotiations. The negotiations with the Soviets regarding the “returning” of Vilnius essentially proceeded as if there had never been the Peace Treaty of 12 July 1920 between Lithuania and Russia. In the entire course of negotiations, the Lithuanian delegation did not even dare to tell their negotiation partners that Vilnius already legally belonged to Lithuania under the above-mentioned treaty and that any new, additional negotiations regarding the transfer of the historical Lithuanian capital to Lithuania were in principle not needed if the Kremlin observed its international obligations. Correspondingly, if the territorial provisions of the peace treaty between Lithuania and Russia were no longer valid for some reason, then the Lithuanian diplomats should have encountered a rather logical question as to the extent and duration of the validity of the new agreement with Bolshevik Russia.

VI.

On the other hand, it is interesting and paradoxical that the political-diplomatic friendship between Kaunas and Moscow during the preceding years and the certain desperation of Lithuanian diplomats notwithstanding, Lithuania was the most energetic among the three Baltic States in its efforts to

²⁴ Confidential *Pro Memoria* on “The Negotiations of Lithuania with the Soviet Union Regarding Vilnius and the Mutual Assistance Pact” of 4 December 1939 of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania J. Urbšys // LCSA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 54, l. 251-260

²⁵ *Ibid*, l. 258.

resist the Soviet protectorate in the autumn of 1939. In summing up Kaunas' position in the negotiations with the Soviets, the *Chargé d'Affaires* of the USSR in Lithuania V.Semionov wrote: "As is well known, Lithuania was the last among the Baltic States to sign the mutual assistance agreement with the Soviet Union, and that with greatest difficulties. Its government quarters were prepared to as much as surrender Vilnius so as to avoid allowing the Soviet military bases into Lithuania."²⁶ Although Lithuanian diplomacy showed its character in the negotiations with the Soviets in October 1939, it nonetheless failed to protect the vital interests of the country. The Kremlin imposed its dictation on Lithuania. On the basis of some historical sources, one possible version would be that this happened mostly because of the inveterate problems of the country's foreign policy, as well as the excessively "pragmatic" approach of the diplomats to the affairs and the relativist treatment of the democratic values.

The unresolved territorial conflict with Poland and the pro-Russian foreign policy orientation developed over the years determined that Russia (the USSR) was viewed in the Lithuanian society, and especially among the intellectuals, as an ally of Lithuania rather than a potential enemy. The anti-Polish moods and the positive image of Russia (the USSR) were psychologically strong enough to obscure even the obvious things from the Lithuanian diplomats. For example, the destruction of Polish statehood in the autumn of 1939 was met with almost Olympian calm by Lithuanian diplomacy. Absent were any greater concerns in Kaunas that the obliteration of the Polish state from the political map of Europe geopolitically implies simply catastrophic consequences for Lithuania and other Baltic States. On the contrary, Lithuanian diplomacy made efforts to persuade the Western politicians and media that Poland had never been geopolitically important and significant for the existence of the Baltic States.²⁷

²⁶ Confidential report No. 220 "On the foreign Policy of Lithuania" of 3 June 1940 of the *Chargé d'Affaires* of the USSR in Lithuania V. Semionov to the People's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of the USSR V. Molotov// FPARE, f. 0151, ap. 31, apl. 57, b. 1, l. 122.

²⁷ Confidential report of 1 April 1940 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// LCSA, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 31, l. 166.

It is characteristic that the trust of the Lithuanian diplomats in Russia did not falter too much even when the Red Army invaded Poland and the Soviet threat to Lithuania became almost physically tangible. The invasion of the Red Army into Poland, which began on September 17, 1939, was essentially interpreted by Lithuanian diplomacy as a favourable factor for Lithuanian affairs. For example, envoy Petras Klimas in Paris, visiting the Quai d'Orsay Palace on the same day in 1939, calmly explained to the rather unbalanced and nonplussed French diplomats that perhaps the Russian invasion into Poland should not be viewed "as an act of aggression" because just as Lithuania had never renounced its rights to Vilnius, so Russia had never abnegated from Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, and thus it was merely reclaiming what belonged to it by outstripping the Germans.²⁸ Klimas had no doubts that the Red Army would not march past the so-called Curzon line and lectured the Deputy Director of the Policy Department of the Quai d'Orsay Charles Rochat that "<...> if Russia now uses the opportunity to overtake the Germans, then this fact, provided that it is duly interpreted, could only be useful for the Western allies in eliciting Russia's neutrality or even effective support in the fight for the liberation of the ethnographic Poland beyond the Curzon line" from the German occupation.²⁹ On September 19, Klimas enunciated essentially analogous ideas to the Chief of Edouard Daladier's Cabinet Robert Coulondre as well. The Lithuanian diplomat was intimating to the French politician that by establishing the eastern borders of Poland on March 15, 1923, the Western allies not only wronged Lithuania but also committed a "great sin" against Russia, and that therefore the best policy of the West would be if "la guerre continue sans rompre avec la Russie."³⁰

²⁸ Confidential report of 17 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, b. 30, l. 159 – 160.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 160.

* continue the war [with the Third Reich] without conflict with Russia (*Fr.*)

³⁰ Confidential report of 20 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, l. 164 – 165.

Visiting the Quai d'Orsay Palace again on September 22, the Lithuanian envoy stated somewhat derisively that the French are nonplussed and that "Russia's action still produces an impression of some mystery here."³¹ Judging from the envoy's report to Kaunas, he himself was feeling very well. According to Klimas, "I explained to Mr Rochat that for 20 years we protested the presence of the Poles in Vilnius because we did not recognise its legitimacy. Last year, after Beck's ultimatum, we were forced to establish diplomatic relations but we never subsequently legalised the sovereignty and the administration of Poland in the Vilnius region. The relations did not change our main position. Therefore, while the Poles were on that territory, we reckoned with this fact. But as this fact is no longer, it is clear that the old legal base has "opened up", namely, the 12 July 1920 Treaty with Russia, which was never abrogated – neither by us nor by the Russians."³² Moreover, building the foundations for the repossession of Vilnius, Klimas dispensed some advice for the French diplomats. He informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs about this initiative of his: "So that no sudden alarm is raised by the press should Moscow and Lithuania seek some resolution to the problem of Vilnius, I requested Mr Rochat to issue instructions to the newspapermen in the light of my account of the issue, or to forbid the journalists altogether from writing about it needlessly before there is something concrete and decided."³³

The official of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not object too much to the expositions of the Lithuanian diplomat but only advised not to rely on the Kremlin unduly because the Russians may declare themselves "successeurs des Polonais"* and settle in the occupied territories for a long time, which would make the situation of the Baltic States unforeseeable. The Head of the Press Department of Quai d'Orsay Jean Paul Boncour also alerted Klimas at that time to the obscure, suspicious plans of the Soviet Union in Eastern and Central Europe and the precarious drifting of Lithuania towards

³¹ Confidential report of 22 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, 1. 168.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

* successors to Poland (*Fr.*)

regaining Vilnius, but in reality – to the clasp of the USSR.³⁴

The Lithuanian envoy in London Bronius Kazys Balutis was also more reserved in showing enthusiasm for the unfolding international situation. In the second part of September, he wrote in a personal letter to his colleague and friend Lithuanian Envoy in the United States of America Povilas Žadeikis: “So, finally, we could not avoid what we were afraid of *and we are in it* [in English in the original]. Our situation under the current circumstances is the best in comparison to what could have been expected in all of this mess. Provided, of course, that we can preserve our neutrality until the end. There are chances, although the longer the war continues the more various unpredicted complications may arise. <...> We already have one such unpredicted complication. It emerged when the Soviets suddenly interfered in the fortunes of Poland and subsequently occupied Vilnius. <...> without surrendering the claims to Vilnius, we must resolve this issue peacefully.”³⁵ During a visit to the Foreign Office on September 18, Balutis was reservedly but patiently persuading the Head of the North Department Laurence Collier that after the Red Army’s invasion in Poland real opportunity opened for Lithuania to regain its historical capital because the Soviets may on their own initiative offer “<...> us to take the territory of Vilnius.”³⁶ And, purportedly, Lithuania could not reject such an offer from Moscow because it would then lose legal (*sic!*) rights to Vilnius. However, the arguments and the approach to the issue presented by Balutis did not appear very reasonable to the British diplomat and did not leave any impression. The Lithuanian envoy was assured that “his Majesty’s government shall not conspire” behind the back of its ally

³⁴ Confidential report of 25 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 30, l. 178.

³⁵ Letter of 25 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Great Britain B.K.Balutis to the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the USA P.Žadeikis// *Ibid.*, b. 9., l. 222 – 223.

³⁶ Confidential report of 29 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the Great Britain B.K.Balutis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, b. 9, l. 224 – 225.

Poland regarding the division of its territories and warned that the greatest threat to Lithuania “comes <...> from the Russian side.”³⁷ Nevertheless, as is evident from the subsequent diplomatic activities of Balutis in London, Collier’s admonishments did not frighten him and he continued the efforts to “regain” Vilnius by way of a bilateral agreement with Russia.³⁸

Similar diplomatic tactics were suggested to the Government in September 1939 by the Lithuanian envoy in Berlin Col. Kazys Škirpa. Immediately after the agreement on the *Borders and Friendship*, signed by Germany and the Soviet Union in Moscow on September 28, 1939, this diplomat unhesitatingly proposed to the government to use the new geopolitical situation and consider reclaiming Vilnius. The envoy wrote on this subject to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kaunas: “The Russo-German agreement of September 28, which records the *de facto* division of Poland, is the reality of such nature which would hardly be changed by anyone. To change it, there should emerge a power which would not only defeat Germany but also force Soviet Russia to withdraw from Poland. Unfortunately, such a power <...> does not exist in Europe.”³⁹ Conclusion: Lithuania should heed not the political interests of Great Britain or France but rather adjust its policies to those of its nearest neighbours – Russia and Germany.

The ostensibly pragmatic but, in reality, devoid of principles and therefore vicious diplomatic practice was also continued later, after the repossession of Vilnius and the establishment of the Red Army military bases in Lithuania. Although after this event most Lithuania diplomats gave a longer pause to

³⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 225.

³⁸ Confidential report No.108 “The Russians and the War” of 19 September 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the Great Britain B.K.Balutis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, l. 213.; Confidential report No.119 “The Prospects of Vilnius Region” of 23 October 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the Great Britain B.K.Balutis to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, l. 234 – 235.

³⁹ Extra-confidential report of 2 October 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Germany Col. K.Škirpa to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys // *Ibid.*, b. 40, l. 100.

the nature of the relations with Russia or even began to worry about the unpredictable behaviour of the big eastern neighbour, they nevertheless hesitated to radically change their attitude. As can be seen from the remaining documents, at the end of 1939 and in the first half of 1940, Lithuanian envoys in the European capitals almost unanimously maintained that the political agreement of 10 October 1939 with the USSR did not limit the sovereignty of Lithuania and the military garrisons of the Red Army did not pose any threat to the independence of the country. On occasion, Lithuanian diplomacy repeated the Kremlin's "arguments" in denying the aggressive nature of the USSR's politics. For example, Klimas cheerfully maintained to the newly appointed ambassador of Great Britain Sir R.Campbell, who arrived in Paris from London in January 1940, that in the Baltic States "the Russians want to keep their garrisons as a symbol only", which would show that the invasion of any third states and, primarily England, (*sic!*) into Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia would encounter resolute opposition from Russia.⁴⁰ And although the Lithuanian diplomat mentioned these Moscow "arguments" to Sir Campbell with an open grin, the British ambassador was not amused. After a lengthy pause he declared to Klimas that such a "trés rusé et pas bête"* man as J.Stalin was certainly "<...> not concerned about such nonsense" as the British invasion of the Baltic States but apparently has certain intentions in the region, which means that the international situation of the Baltic States, diplomatically speaking, has become "trés curieuse"**⁴¹.

It may be noted here that the Lithuanians were more or less echoed on this issue by the Estonian and Latvian diplomats resident in the West.⁴²

⁴⁰ Confidential report of 6 January 1940 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs E.Turauskas// *Ibid.*, b. 31, l. 9.

* very cunning and smart (*Fr.*)

** very curiously (*Fr.*)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, l. 10.

⁴² Confidential report of 29 February 1940 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P.Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, l. 106.

Naturally, such statements by the Baltic diplomats usually inspired certain astonishment or half-veiled smiles on the part of the Westerners, since from October 1939 all three Baltic States were rather unequivocally considered in Western diplomatic spheres as “Russian satellites”, bereft of their sovereignty, or as “the vassals of Russia <...> fallen into the Russian basket.”⁴³ Western media such as *The Daily Herald*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *L'Oeuvre*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Star*, etc. gave a similar assessment of the situation as well. For example, on October 5, 1939 *The Washington Star* published a characteristic political cartoon: Stalin, garbed in a white doctor's gown and armed with a scalpel, stands at an operating table, on which lies and wails Estonia and Latvia which have already been operated on, whereas Lithuania and Finland are standing fretfully behind the door in the corridor, awaiting their turn...⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the critical responses of the Western diplomats, politicians or media about the international situation of the Baltic States, as well as admonishments about the mounting threats to them, apparently had difficulties in reaching the addressees. Even during the last months of independence, Lithuanian diplomacy was rather inert in its actions and stereotypically favoured the somewhat grievous experiences of the previous years. Many typical facts could be provided to illustrate how Lithuanian diplomacy reflected the international discourse and differentiated between the threats to the state on the eve of the destruction of Lithuanian independence. However, perhaps the most eloquent example is the proposal made to the government by Klimas, the Lithuanian envoy in France, at the beginning of

⁴³ Confidential report of 27 February 1940 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France PKlimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Urbšys// *Ibid.*, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 2226, l. 43.

⁴⁴ Confidential report of 6 October 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the USA Povilas Žadeikis to the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs// *Ibid.*, f. 656, ap. 1, b. 133, l. 425.; Confidential report of 23 October 1939 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in the USA Povilas Žadeikis to the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs// *Ibid.*, b. 134, l. 79.

1940 concerning the construction of the Lithuanian defences in the south of the country (in Suvalkija). The fortifications would be analogous to the Finnish Mannerheim line and would protect Lithuania against ... the eventual attack by Poland. The envoy urged the government not to procrastinate or spare money and commence the works immediately after hiring the required specialists from abroad. In January 1940, the diplomat wrote from Paris to the Minister of Foreign affairs in Kaunas: “<...> whatever it takes must be done not to end up in the situation in which we were in in 1920 when Zeligowski found an almost empty space around Vilnius. We must immediately begin the forced construction of our own Gediminas or Mindaugas line against the invasion from the likely side of the Polish invasion exclusively. <...>. Since we don't have the resources for the construction of defences on all sides, neither the Russian nor the German side, we must concentrate all our efforts in the south because the threat of attack is possible only from there. <...> I believe that our military leadership should invite specialists for earth and concrete works, as was done by the Finnish when they invited the Belgian general Emile Badoux. If the resources for large concrete structures are lacking, then we should at least construct appropriate land fortifications out of wood without any delay. The world would laugh at us if we were caught unprepared.”⁴⁵ Considering that the Polish state had already been *de facto* destroyed by the Nazi-Soviet aggression by the end of September 1939, these recommendations of Klimas to the government do not apparently require wider historical commentaries. Only, perhaps that Klimas was one of the most notable and experienced diplomats of interwar Lithuania, who had spent the entire two decades of independence in diplomatic service.

V. Instead of an epilogue

In mid-June of 1940, the accelerated war machine of Fascist Germany was rapidly advancing towards Paris, crushing the united French-British forces on the way. The approach of the *Vermacht* to the capital of France produced a veritable political shock in Europe. However, the population of France

⁴⁵ Confidential report of 12 January 1940 of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in France P. Klimas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Urbšys // *Ibid.*, f. 648, ap. 1, b. 31, l. 17 – 18.

itself was, of course, shattered most by the tragic course of events. Counsellor of the Lithuanian Embassy in France Dr Stasys Antanas Bačkis reported to Kaunas about the predominant moods and the desperate behaviour of Parisians during those days:

“On June 10, when the news spread about Italy entering the war on the German side, the inhabitants of Paris were struck by panic and the flight from the city between June 10 and 14 created a gruesome view. People of various ages and social positions were fleeing. The urge to flee was so great and all-embracing that it seemed that the fugitives were guided by only the motive of self-preservation. <...>. Most fled without even knowing their destination. <...>. As a result of the panic flight, there were no buses, taxis or cars left in Paris, and as of June 11 the trains stopped as well. Shops, kiosks and offices closed down, banks did not service clients. Approximately eighty per cent of the shops closed down. <...>. The view of fugitives grew increasingly dismal since the poorest part of the society fled on their bleeding feet; with small children, having piled their property on bicycles, in buckets, prams and barrows. <...>. Although by the evening of June 12 it became apparent that the battles were taking place in the vicinity of the city, the French were still waiting for a miracle, as in 1924 at Marné, and dismissed any thought that the Germans would capture Paris. <...>. On June 13, the movement in the city further abated; the fugitives went on foot and rode bicycles. Only the metro was operating, as well as some shops, cafes and restaurants. The power supply began breaking in the evening. In the afternoon, huge explosions began resounding from the suburbs – weapon and ammunition storages, oil repositories, bridges and factories were being blown up. The society was overwhelmed by depression. The French realised that their situation was hopeless.”⁴⁶

Only a day had passed after the fall of Paris when the Lithuanian society was struck by similar depression. The military-political catastrophe of the French Republic at the beginning of summer 1940 and the subsequent political turmoil in Europe appeared to the Kremlin as the most suitable opportunity for the realisation of its geopolitical goals. The Soviet leadership did not miss this opportunity – on June 15, 1940, the Red Army occupied Lithuania. A month later, Lithuania was annexed. The long years of captivity

began for the Lithuanian nation and state. Thus, contrary to the fears and forecasts of Lithuanian diplomacy, the greatest threat to the Lithuanian state in the twentieth century did not come from the south but from the east.... The patriarch of

French diplomacy in the first half of the twentieth century Jules Cambon, reflecting during one diplomatic party on the everlasting international conflicts in the old continent, provided approximately the following definition of successful diplomatic activity to the younger colleagues. It is not necessary to be preoccupied with external image, especially if the financial resources of the represented country are limited. It is much more important to act in such a way as to convey the position of one's government on one issue or another to foreign opponents in such a way as if it had always been useful and acceptable to them, and to inform the leadership of one's country about the stance of the opponents in such a way as if the opponents were only awaiting an opportunity to extract concession and compromises.⁴⁷ Could we unequivocally state today that Lithuanian diplomacy in the interwar period had sufficiently mastered the art of compromise in all cases?

⁴⁶ Confidential report of 17 June 1940 of the Counsellor of the Lithuanian Embassy in France Dr. S.A. Bačkis to the Director of the Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Dr E. Turauskas// The Centre for Storage and Research of the Documents of the Modern History of Russia, f. 597, ap. 3, b. 4, l. 66 – 68. [The reader might have noticed that this report of the Lithuanian diplomat was discovered not in the Lithuanian archives but in the document repositories of the Russian Federation in Moscow. This fact could be explained by the fact that a large part of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania which were seized in autumn 1940 and transferred to Moscow have not yet been returned to the Republic of Lithuania.]

⁴⁷ Confidential diplomatic diaries of 10 April 1935 of the *Chargé d'Affaires* of the USSR in France Vladimir Sokolin// FPARF, f. 082, ap. 18, apl. 82, b. 28, l. 42.

LITHUANIAN FOREIGN POLICY: CONCEPTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PREDICAMENTS

Evaldas Nekrašas

The results, achieved in the Lithuanian foreign policy since the restoration of statehood in 1990 and the Lithuanian interwar foreign policy achievements do not lend themselves to easy comparison. The declaration of independence in 1918 led to a gradual recognition of the Lithuanian state by the world community. However, the basis for its existence was frail. What made Lithuania vulnerable in terms of security and international standing was the long-running dispute with Poland over Vilnius, which was finally returned to Lithuania in 1939. Despite the fact that the recovery of Vilnius topped the interwar agenda of the foreign policy, few rejoiced when the task was eventually accomplished. The deployment of Soviet troops on Lithuanian territory was understood as the imposition of restraints on sovereignty. It was obvious to any pundit that the transfer of Vilnius back where it belonged meant the overture of the transfer (occupation, annexation) of the whole Lithuanian state to the Soviet Union.

The conflict with Poland impaired Lithuania's attempts to maintain good relations even with its closest neighbours such as Latvia and Estonia. Lithuania was practically isolated in Europe and had no allies. Neither the League of Nations nor the "Baltic l'Entente" could be relied upon as security ensuring organisations.

The international situation Lithuania found itself in after the restoration of its statehood in 1990 was no better than that of 1918, and in certain cases, it was even worse. Recognition was a slow process; therefore Lithuania was exposed to the threat of destruction for about a year and a half, as Soviet troops were deployed on its territory for over two years.

It was only in 1991, after the August coup in Moscow, that Lithuania was recognised by the majority of states all over the world. It took another two years before Lithuania unconditionally fulfilled all the criteria of an

independent state, i.e. it (its government) exercised full control over its territory and enjoyed international diplomatic recognition.

After the withdrawal, Lithuania faced another important foreign policy problem, which was metaphorically called a “return to Europe”. It had to be diplomatically ensured. The Europe of the end of the 20th century was not ridden or front-line-partitioned, but peaceful, integrating with the identity being strengthened not so much by the heritage of Western Christianity or Antiquity as by successfully developed European institutions, given rise to during the post-war period.

Having taken its first steps towards Europe, Lithuania decided to clearly define its foreign policy priorities. They were laid down in the concept of the Lithuanian foreign policy and have consistently been followed by Lithuania since 1994. There were the following three priorities: membership in the EU, membership in NATO and good relations with neighbours.

The priority targets set by Lithuania were essentially achieved in 2004. It became a full-fledged member of NATO and the European Union. However, its good relationships with its neighbours should be treated with certain reservations. The best ties have been maintained with Poland. Considering the fact that at the end of 1991 then President of Poland Lech Wałęsa called the relationship between Poland and Lithuania as being “on the verge of crisis”, the progress achieved since then has been really impressive. Lithuania’s relationship with Latvia and Estonia in 2004 had not improved much since 1994. Ties with Russia, irrespective of some important positive moves – such as signature and ratification of the Border Agreement – have been vulnerable, to put it mildly. The same applies to the relationship with Belarus.

Yet, the implementation of at least two of the three strategic priorities of the Lithuanian foreign policy gave rise to the question: what comes next?

The question would raise few eyebrows. But answers, obviously, would not be uniform. In principal, however, this question may be ignored if we agree with the Estonians, who tend to maintain that the independent Estonian foreign policy in the EU, in the strict meaning of the word, is superfluous, since from now on the Estonian foreign policy is going to be shaped by the EU.

In Lithuania, this position seems to have few supporters, except several high-ranking officials representing certain foreign policy institutions, who

have long been maintaining that it would be best for Lithuania to become a placid province of the EU with low publicity but a comfortable life. Lithuania, as a small state, should focus on domestic, primarily on economic and welfare issues.

Certainly, the provision of favourable conditions for welfare development is one of the major eventual targets of foreign policy. Still, there is another target of no less importance. It is national security. Does membership in NATO and the EU automatically ensure security, especially when it is understood not only in the military but also the modern or wider meaning of the word? It seems that the Russian threat of not only military but also economic and political nature and the growing trend of authoritarianism has still remained an issue for the Lithuanian security, as the membership in the aforementioned organisations has not eliminated it, but, paradoxically, added to its escalation. Active, and not only reactive foreign policy and good contacts with the USA could mitigate the situation. On the other hand, active foreign policy can obviously largely help not only to address national security but also public welfare problems.

There are other reasons of local character justifying the need for a more independent foreign policy. First of all, the so-called Kaliningrad problem. Kaliningrad can be labelled as a “geopolitical hostage”. As the legacy of WWII, it seems to continue giving Lithuania headaches. Another issue of concern is Lukashenka’s Belarus, which has a common border of several hundred kilometres with Lithuania causing problems to Lithuanian foreign policy. These two aspects of the Lithuanian geographic position alone justify the claim that Lithuania cannot refuse active foreign policy as yet.

Thus, we should welcome attempts to revise the Lithuanian foreign policy as ten years have passed since it was adopted in 1994 and two of the priorities have been accomplished. As a matter of fact, the concept of 1994 has never been made public. However, it was approved by the Government, and its major principles were outlined in a speech by then President Algirdas Brazauskas delivered at Vilnius University. They were later followed as guidelines for foreign policy related decisions.

The 2004 concept has not been publicised either. However, its basic provisions have been outlined in several important speeches by statesmen, as well as in certain documents. The following should be mentioned: 1) The

resolution of the Parliament on foreign policy guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania, having become a full-fledged member of NATO and the EU, adopted on 1 May; 2) The speech “New Lithuanian Foreign Policy” by Arturas Paulauskas, Acting President of the Republic of Lithuania, delivered at Vilnius University on 24 May; 3) The speech by President Valdas Adamkus at a meeting with diplomatic heads of foreign representations accredited in Lithuania, made on 14 July; 4) The agreement on foreign policy priorities and objectives 2004-2008, signed at the President’s office on 5 October between representatives of thirteen political parties; 5) the resolution on continuity of foreign policy guidelines, adopted by the newly elected Seimas on 16 November.

Artūras Paulauskas seemed to be most thorough in detailing the priorities of the foreign policy. He defined ten basic trends. First – full integration into the EU organisation. Second – reinforcement of interaction between the Euro-Atlantic alliance, the EU and NATO. Third – active involvement in EU-Russia co-operation, seeking to promote pragmatic neighbourhood policy with Russia. Fourth – co-operation with Poland with a view of strengthening strategic partnership which could become “a nucleus, uniting Northern, Central and Eastern Europe”. Fifth – reinforcement of Baltic-Nordic co-operation, seeking to create a more integrated Baltic Sea region. Sixth – bringing the Kaliningrad region closer to Europe. Seventh – “active support for Belarus in its effort to become a predictable, democratic and independent European state.” Eighth – full support to Ukrainian reforms and its aspirations regarding the EU and NATO. Ninth – active involvement in multilateral forums. Tenth – more efficient use of the support of old and new emigration for Lithuanian international activities.

The provisions identified in Paulauskas’ speech were based on the principles of the foreign policy concept of 1994 and seemed to have taken account of the changes in the national geopolitical situation. This speech, as well as other texts, has given rise to new ideas enabling us to speak about the “new” Lithuanian foreign policy. This policy, at least theoretically, seeks to be active and influential, instead of passive and reactive; it also raises a new objective of achieving the level of the old EU members in 15 - 30 years, thus becoming an important and visible state within the EU and NATO, able to encourage dialogue between cultures and civilisations, striving towards

a larger, stronger and more open Europe, which would maintain positive ties with the US. The most important aspect of this novelty, however, is the aspiration to become “the regional gravity centre”, “regional leader” or to put it simply - “regional centre”.

Basically, the majority of the provisions laid down above are acceptable, except certain things which raise some doubts. One of the concerns, formal as it might seem on the surface, is really significant. An important advantage of the 1994 foreign policy conception was the fact that it set three priorities, two of them being very specific, i.e. the aspiration to become a member of NATO and the EU.

In foreign policy, the implementation of only two specific priorities of equal importance can cause enough problems in terms of required focus intensity, let alone ten. Having ten priorities (the Parliament resolution of 1 May 2004 goes on to specify as many as 22) means having none. It also means that the new foreign policy loses its backbone. To avoid this, the order of priority needs to be clearly defined. Otherwise, the Lithuanian foreign policy might lose focus and become void.

The second reproach with regard to the new guidelines of the foreign policy would be their abstract and indefinite nature. In this respect, they are similar to the third priority of the foreign policy in 1994, which read as follows: “to have or maintain good relations with neighbours”. It has already been mentioned that this priority has failed to be achieved in its entirety.

This statement cannot be called specific either. “Good relations with neighbours” is a less defined concept than, say, membership in the EU. Besides, there is a lot of space for subjective reflections while measuring the degree of goodness of the relations. How can it be gauged? Based on a number of acting interstate co-operation institutions? In this case, Lithuanian-Latvian and Lithuanian-Estonian relations are as good as Lithuanian-Polish relations. Or is it the number of presidential visits paid that defines a certain degree of goodness? In this case, Poland is the best. Its significance for the foreign policy of Lithuania throughout the last 8-9 years may be highlighted by the definition “strategic partnership”, which has been successfully exploited by both countries. Nevertheless, many practical problems in connection with economy, transport and energy, irrespective of the number of co-operation institutions and forums in place, have not been sorted out. This also relates to the activity

of interests groups, blocking the construction of a power bridge to Poland, red tape problems, but above all, the fact that Lithuania, due to demographic and other differences, is not considered an equal partner to Poland.

Let us move on to the most ambitious idea of the new conception, i.e. the aspiration to become regional leader, centre or gravity centre. These words were used by Paulauskas in his speech when defining Lithuania's role in Europe. The Parliamentary resolution of 1 May 2004 reduces the ambitions to: "becoming one of the regional centres that has an influence on the neighbourhood policy of the EU". But the agreement on foreign policy goals and priorities 2004-2008, signed between the political parties on 5 October, 2004, puts Lithuania again in a more ambitious position in the context of Europe: Lithuania has to become "an active and attractive interregional co-operation centre, uniting cultures and civilisations" and the foreign policy objective formulation 2004-2008 aims to become the centre for cultural exchange, with Vilnius as a centre of international conferences and initiatives.

Active foreign policy is advantageous. The state is better off in carrying out its national interests, ensuring security and public welfare. It becomes more visible globally. Its image has a direct relation to the symbolic capital, which later can turn into a real capital contributing to overall investment and GDP growth. The latest illustration of an active, successful and internationally recognised activity has been the successful mediation by the Polish and Lithuanian presidents in solving political problems in relation to the rigged elections in Ukraine.

The role of both leaders was predetermined not only by the old common and frequently problematic history of the three states, or the positive disposition of Ukrainian people towards the Lithuanians, but above all, by active regional policy, consistently pursued by Lithuania for about a decade. The idea of trilateral co-operation between Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine has been promoted in Lithuania since 1997 after it was acknowledged that it had many advantages in comparison to the idea of co-operation between the Baltic and Black Sea states. The actual co-operation – mostly at the Presidential level – goes back to 1998. Thus the invitation of Valdas Adamkus and Aleksandre Kwaśniewski for resolution of the Ukrainian crisis in 2004 by Leonid Kuchma was naturally consequential.

The events in Ukraine and the inert reaction from the EU again prove that the defence of our own interests should remain as a cornerstone of foreign policy for Lithuania – not only outside the Euro-Atlantic borders, but also within them. Lithuanian attempts to make the EU and NATO pursue “open door” policy, including with regard to eastern neighbours, is not merely a statement. The matter is that many old EU member states see the prospects of EU development in a different light compared to Lithuania and many other newcomers. Partly due to geographic as well as other reasons, Turkey, to old member states, seems more important than Ukraine, which has been devoid of EU attention until now. Javier Solana’s role in Kiev was less important than that of Adamkus and Kwasniewski because some EU states did not see a reason to contribute to the Ukrainian crisis resolution. They did not take into account the geopolitical significance of Ukraine and/or, as usual, were effusively concerned about the possible Russian reaction to the EU initiatives in this country. Thus, the Lithuanian foreign policy priority should be to shape the emerging CFSP, in co-operation with other newcomers, so that it meets the position of the Eastern member states. These members tend to understand the interests of the enlarged Europe better than the old member states, who, at least psychologically, view Ukraine now and obviously in the future as part of Russia. In my understanding, compared to Turkey, Ukraine is a more European state in all respects and its potential to become a full-fledged member of the EU, as a matter of fact, is better than that of Turkey. Moreover, it could be said (this is not the official position of Lithuania) that the CFSP is considerably deformed and geographically unbalanced. It is obvious that Eastern Europe has not been given adequate attention and it was basically looked upon from the Russian perspective. The hope is that Vladimir Putin’s failure in Ukraine and Viktor Yushchenko’s success will serve as the basis for revision of the EU policy in this regard and will possibly encourage the EU to make conclusions regarding the policy absence with respect to Belarus.

However, does Lithuania have to try to become a “regional centre” while actively implementing its foreign policy? If we put the question this way, we must first define the region. Those who speak about Lithuania as a regional centre are unable to give a more specific reply. The problem of Lithuanian regional identity is important and interesting. The author of this article

happened to defend the opinion, which at that time looked heretical to some people. Lithuania, in its efforts to establish regional identity, should turn to the Baltic Sea region, instead of Northern or Central Europe. But Lithuania will never become the centre of this region and not because it has not been a sea state for many centuries, but because it is too poor in its demographic, economic and other potential.

Nor can it become the regional centre of Central Europe. So what is in store? Asked about the geographical borders of the region that Lithuania would claim to become the centre of, one of the participants of one of many conferences on the deliberation of the new concept of Lithuanian foreign policy, held at the end of summer 2004, gave a really witty reply saying it would be a triangle, including Kaliningrad, Seinai and Vilnius. Co-operation with the Kaliningrad region, aiming for its faster integration, would be really relevant, as would be caring about the Seinai Lithuanian community, but I do not think that these are the most important tasks of the Lithuanian foreign policy.

The idea of being the leader of a somewhat wider area than the above-mentioned triangle seems quite realistic. The latest economic development rate lends the idea of Lithuania becoming a leader and, further, it could be maintained that Lithuania (at least in 2003) succeeded in leading Europe. But the last statement reveals another thing as well – the idea of a leader needs to be defined more specifically (just like regional boundaries) for this ambition to be laid down as the major goal of the Lithuanian foreign policy. Still, a more important Lithuanian foreign policy goal in defence of its interests is not a somewhat megalomaniac aspiration to become a “centre” or “leader”, but strengthening co-operation with its neighbours, especially within the EU. Lithuania has to focus more on becoming an active, visible and influential European state than on the idea of “regional” or “interregional” centre. To this end, it has to develop an even more specific approach to the processes, forms and ways of integration happening in Europe today. This, to my mind, should make up an integral part of the Lithuanian foreign policy conception.

THE „IMPERIAL“ DIPLOMACY OF LITHUANIA*

Alvydas Nikžentaitis

The forthcoming membership of Lithuania in NATO and the EU prompts a review of the foreign policy priorities of Lithuania, adjusting to the new political realities and fresh opportunities. It has apparently been decided what Lithuania will do upon becoming a part of the European Union and NATO: first of all, relations with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and the countries of South Caucasus will be developed. The essential difference between the new and the old foreign policy priorities is easy to spot when comparing them. If before, seeking to gain membership in the EU and NATO, the Lithuanian state was primarily preoccupied with itself, then the development of relations with the above-mentioned states constitutes a qualitative change in the foreign policy: perhaps for the first time since the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Lithuania is seeking to become a regional state, and its foreign policy is acquiring the features of an “imperial policy”. Therefore, in discussing the prospects of this kind of foreign policy, it is not unjustified to turn to the past – to the times of “imperial” Lithuania.

The Grand Duchy is the Lithuanian state which existed the longest, but it does not at all mean that during the entire period between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries that this state conducted imperial policies and used the instruments of imperial diplomacy. If imperial policies are understood as policies oriented towards the expansion of the state’s influence and territories at the expense of other states in the region, we might as well introduce a new periodisation of the whole history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in this regard:

Stage I – from the establishment of the GDL until the first half of the fourteenth century;

* The author left the text that was read during the conference unchanged, adding only the necessary references to the literature and sources.

Stage II – from the first half of the fourteenth century until the first half of the sixteenth century; and

Stage III – from the first half of the sixteenth century until the collapse of the GDL at the end of the eighteenth century.

At least a brief characterisation of the first and the third stage is necessary in order to justify this type periodisation of the history of the imperial policies of the GDL and to clarify why, under this scheme, only the second period is considered to be a classical example of imperial policies.

For a historian who researches the history of the Middle Ages, it is evident that mature policies do not form immediately after establishing a state. The example of the Mindaugas' state gives a particularly good illustration of the validity of this statement. Although the anniversary of Mindaugas' coronation was solemnly marked this year, a closer examination of the policies of Mindaugas and his followers readily show that the christening and the coronation of Mindaugas was partly accidental, and that until the very end of the thirteenth century, the Lithuanian state did not have any clearly expressed foreign policy priorities, that it acted under the political influence of the South-Western Rus and was part of the system of post-Kyivan Rus.¹

It would also be difficult to call the policies of the GDL from the beginning of the sixteenth century “imperial”, albeit for entirely different reasons. First of all, in the aftermath of the final loss of Smolensk in 1514, the imperial policies of the GDL were checked by the Moscow threat. The Lithuanian state was forced to concentrate all of its resources for its protection and was thus lacking the power and the opportunities for influencing the outside.² Naturally, the foreign policy during this long period contained some elements of imperial policies as well. Nonetheless, these were rather exceptions to the rule in the whole of history of the state.

Thus, if we want to talk about the imperial policy and diplomacy of

¹ Cf. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, *Nuo Daumanto iki Gedimino. Iki krikščioniškos Lietuvos visuomenės bruožai* (Acta historica Universitatis Klaipedensis V), 113–114.

² Cf. Edvardas Gudavičius, *Lietuvos istorija: Nuo seniausių laikų iki 1569 metų* (Vilnius, 1999, V. 1), 513–522.

Lithuania, we have to focus on the second stage between the first half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century. As is well known, this period in particular was marked by the rapid territorial expansion of the GDL, whereby Lithuania occupied the area between the Baltic and the Black seas. The statistical Lithuanian is perhaps proudest of this period when discussing the past achievements of the state, although, truly, he may not even be aware that the aspirations of the GDL were far greater and that only a few of the political aims were successfully realised.

In the course of the fourteenth century, primarily during the many negotiations with Hungarian, Czech and Polish kings regarding the christening of Lithuania, the Lithuanian side was raising a whole range of political requests. The attempts at realising and not merely declaring these requests allow for their characterisation as the foreign policy priorities of the GDL. Let me list the most important of them:

- 1) Making peace with the German Order;
- 2) Creation of a separate church province in Lithuania;
- 3) Transference of the German Order to the borderline of the Russian and Tatar lands and handover of part of the territories in its possession;
- 4) Recognition of the right of the GDL to conquer all Russian lands.³

If we venture to assess the claims raised and the likelihood of their success, we may surely get the impression that their realisation was impossible. Should the Lithuanian side then be considered to have been dreamers without a sense of reality? Apparently, this was not the case, especially if we take into consideration the somewhat larger context.

In solving the puzzle as to whether the political plans of the GDL in relation to the christening of Lithuania were realistic or not, it is worth turning back to 1323-1324, taking note of way which already then was proposed for the resolution of the issues of relations to the German Order and the christening of Lithuania. One of the contemporary advisers of Gediminas recommended that the sovereign of Lithuania, in seeking solutions to im-

³ Jerzy Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki* (Wrocław, 1982), 88 -97; Edvardas Gudavičius, "Lietuvos krikščionybės priėmimo politinė problema", in *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis: 1987 metai* (Vilnius, 1988) 14 -22.

portant political aims, turn not to the archbishop of Riga, who himself had difficulties in defending against the Livonian Order, but to much more powerful sovereigns, such as Czech or Hungarian kings.⁴ Taking into account the power of these two states, the demands of the GDL dukes were not that utopian. However, was the realisation of the political programme of the GDL really connected to the intervention of these two states?

There is no space for presenting in this short report all the arguments which would allow for at least a hypothetical talk about such political orientation of the GDL. However, the very course of negotiations in 1351 and 1358 shows that this possibility should not be rejected. In any case, Poland was not acting alone during the negotiations – behind its back stood Hungary and the Czech Kingdom, i.e. precisely those states with which the realisation of the political aims of the GDL was linked already at the end of the fourteenth century. The vestiges of Hungary were clearly observable in 1373 as well, i.e. during the time when this state was connected to Poland through a personal union. The case of 1349 is perhaps more complex, but even here, taking into account the closer relations between Polish and Czech kingdoms after the Namslav agreement, it cannot be excluded that the much more powerful Czech kingdom was behind Poland at that time as well. A certain interest on the part of Czechs in the christening of the GDL is confirmed not only by the negotiations of 1358 but also by the previous actions of this state. Czech rulers participated in the military campaigns against Lithuania in 1329, 1337 and 1345, and the Czech king Jan Lucembursky himself christened the Samogitian nobility captured during the Samogitian operation in 1329. Therefore, it is possible to at least hypothetically maintain that Poland's role in the fourteenth century negotiations regarding the christening was that of an intermediary only, which could be confirmed by the earlier-made remark on the rather limited contacts between Poland and the GDL until the very end of the fourteenth century.

By the second half of the fourteenth century, the possibilities for negotiations with Hungary and the Czech kingdom were exhausted without actually finding a partner for the realisation of the political programme of the GDL. In 1382, the GDL managed to reach an agreement regarding the christening

⁴ *Gedimino laiškai*, eds. V. T. Pašutas and I. V. Štal (Vilnius 1966), 141.

with the German Order, but its terms were far from satisfying to the maximalist aspirations of the rulers of the GDL: according to the 1382 Dubysos agreement, which never actually became effective, promised to relinquish Samogitia to the Order in exchange for the christening⁵. The critical situation that had formed prompted a feverish search for more advantageous options. The option of the Orthodox christening of the GDL and the formation of a union with Moscow in the ninth decade of the fourteenth century should also be viewed in this context. It would follow from the historical development of events in fourteenth century that the union with Poland was an accidental choice and not a logical outcome of events consequent to the relations between the GDL and the Polish kingdom in the fourteenth century.⁶

The choice of Poland as a strategic partner was not the worst option for the GDL. The German Order was defeated with the help of the Polish Kingdom, thereby eliminating a competitor in the conquest of the whole Russia.

It would seem that the circle of officials responsible for foreign policy in the GDL should have been less complex than it is in present states, but this impression could form only in ignorance of the particularities of medieval states. Apart from the institutions of the Grand Duke and, later, the Council of Lords, the interests of the dynasty itself should not be underestimated. The role of dynastic politics has been sufficiently highlighted in examining the relations between the Polish kingdom and the GDL but has not received enough attention in the context of the realisation of the policy priorities of the GDL. It is quite possible that, having properly assessed the dynastic politics, we may state the realisation of yet another foreign policy priority, namely, the inclusion of part of Prussia into the Polish kingdom (not into the GDL).

Discussions of the imperial diplomacy of the GDL often view its manifestations in relation to the incorporation of new territories. This focus of

⁵ Edvardas Gudavičius, "Lietuvos krikščionybės priėmimo politinė problema", 14 – 22.

⁶ Alvydas Nikžentaitis, "Wielkie Księstwo Liteskie, Królestwo Polskie i państwo zakonu krzyżackiego w XIV wieku", in *Prusy i Inflanty średniowieczem a nowożytnością. Państwo – społeczeństwo – kultura*, eds. B. Dybas and D. Makilla (Torun, 2003), 9 – 16.

attention on military conquests is not mistaken but should not be exclusive either. Other goals existed besides the military ones. For example, in the second part of the fourteenth century, there were a number of military conflicts between the GDL and Poland which were by no means territorial. The worsening in the relations with Poland resulted from the GDL's attempts to direct the trade routes from Western Europe to the Russian lands through the territories of the GDL. This episode should not be considered accidental because the commercialisation of the foreign policy of the GDL is noticeable from the beginning of the fourteenth century: in 1338, the first trade agreement in GDL history was signed with Livonia, prior to which an agreement had been made regarding the safety of merchants travelling from Livonia to the GDL during the military conflicts between Lithuania and the German Order. These sporadic facts are complemented by the economisation of Lithuania's war with the German knights, where the main goal of many campaigns was not conquest but pillaging and, especially, taking war hostages into captivity in order to subsequently sell or release them for monetary compensations. The culmination of this peculiar slave trade in the Baltic region was reached after the Grunwald battle. The ransom for the hostages of war stipulated in a secret protocol signed between the two warring parties was greater than the sum of reparations for damages inflicted by the German Order on Poland and Lithuania.⁷

The foreign policy of the GDL is a rather complex subject which has not been studied much so far and which could warrant more than one monograph. However, a report on the imperial diplomacy of the GDL made in a conference on the foreign policy of modern Lithuania requires raising one more question: how can the experience of the old diplomacy of Lithuania be useful for the contemporary foreign policy of Lithuania, which is still being formed.

Many parallels and examples can of course be brought up in assessing the past and the present. For example, the shift to broader, "imperial" foreign policy priorities in the foreign policy of the old, as well as the new,

⁷ Alvydas Nikžentaitis, "Prisoners of War in Lithuania and the Teutonic Order State (1283 -1409)", in *Der Deutsche Orden in der Zeit der Kalmarer Union*, ed. Zenon Hubert Nowak (Torun, 1999), 193 –209.

Lithuania takes place only after stabilising the situations within the country. However, this is not the most useful moment in relation to the formation of new foreign policy priorities with regard to Ukraine, Belarus and, to some extent, Moldova. What is far more important to the future foreign policy of Lithuania is the assessment of Lithuanian imperialism in the neighbouring countries. The construction of the occupation of the old Lithuania as a certain “golden age” in the contemporary Ukraine or the claims to the cultural heritage of the GDL made in Belarus provide a sufficiently firm basis for the development of qualitatively new relations between Lithuania and these two states. Historians should not be ignored in forming the new policy priorities with regard to Belarus and Ukraine but should work together with the diplomats of Lithuania, only the nature of their work ought to be essentially different. Leaving the day-to-day relations with the neighbours to the diplomats, historians should preoccupy themselves with the transformation of the cultural memory of Lithuania and, perhaps, the whole post-GDL region. As the research of the recent years shows, history plays a significant role here.⁸ Although cultural memory is not at all the same as history, perhaps historians should cross the Rubicon in the name of democracy in the neighbouring countries with which we share a common past, and not only examine but also create new cultural memory. For Lithuania’s sake ...*

⁸ Cf. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (4th Edition, München, 2002).

* Reference to lines in the national anthem of Lithuania. – Transl. note

LITHUANIA'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY *

Acting President of Lithuania (2004, April – July)

Artūras Paulauskas

Nearly a decade ago, President Algirdas Brazauskas outlined during a meeting at Vilnius University three priority goals of Lithuania's foreign policy: membership of the European Union, membership of NATO and good neighbourly relations.

Today Lithuania is a member of the European Union and a member of NATO. NATO fighters safeguard our peace. Our minister is working in Brussels as a member of the European Commission. In a few weeks the people of Lithuania will go to the polls to elect their first representatives to the European Parliament.

These are the results that we have managed to achieve in fourteen years.

Membership of the European Union and NATO has become a reality only because we did not hesitate to undertake challenging and often painful reforms, which changed in principle the economic relations within our state and the structure of our society. We have succeeded only because our people and our politicians were working hand in hand. This is a lesson that should be remembered.

I am certain that we will continue working hand in hand and each of us will act responsibly and deliver his contribution in building the State of Lithuania.

Today we can work on our economic and social tasks in a qualitatively new environment. Yet not all citizens of our state can reap the benefits of reforms. This causes certain social tension and makes us search for non-conventional solutions. Reforms should bring tangible benefits to every citizen of Lithuania.

These are my departure points for our discussion about the guidelines for our new foreign policy. The discussion about the need to develop these

* This article was prepared on the basis of the speech, which was delivered by H. E. Mr. Artūras Paulauskas, Acting President of the Republic of Lithuania, at Vilnius University on 24th of May 2004.

guidelines has been going on for several years and I believe that we have reached a principle agreement on a number of points. All of us agree that Lithuania should be a prominent, active and influential member of the European Union and NATO. All of us agree that we should make Lithuanian people take pride in their country and secure their support for foreign policy pursued by the state.

But where do our current priorities lie?

Our two ultimate national goals of attaining security and well being have so intricately intertwined today that it is difficult to draw a clear line between domestic and foreign policy. Sometimes we hear that with NATO membership Lithuania has solved its key security issues and therefore could redirect its efforts towards building a welfare state. However, the 21st century has brought new security challenges. They are not visible at first sight since they emerge in economy, financial system, communications and easy to target framework of society and governmental institutions.

These problems should also be addressed as otherwise the system of well being which we have been labouring on might disintegrate at a certain moment.

Today we discuss Lithuania in twenty or thirty years. In my view, that much time will be needed to catch up with the old members of the European Union. This catching-up policy will most probably be in the focus of our attention in the near future. Indeed, we need to integrate in a short time into the transport and energy systems of the European Union and upgrade our energy sector. We need to revive our rural areas and strengthen the agricultural sector. Then the support received from Structural Funds will benefit our culture. We need to join the euro zone and the Schengen area, if we want Lithuania to take full part in the Union's economic and social life.

We need to strengthen Lithuania from within in order to get ready to withstand the threats of the 21st century.

But will it be sufficient for Lithuania to become a prominent and influential member of the European Union and NATO? Is the ambition to “catch up” and “surpass” the other members of this elite club and reach the present level of development of at least 15 EU members our top priority goal?

Economic motivation and aspiration to a higher quality of life are equally important to both domestic and foreign policy. True, it is easier for an affluent state to act in the environment of global competition and defend its citizens and their legitimate interests.

Money helps in seeking fame, recognition and influence, but money does not provide all those things automatically. The world, be it rich or poor, has not only interests but also values. The stronger are the values on which a state is based, the more successful is its domestic and foreign policy.

Therefore Lithuania, which is much stronger today, should look not only after its well being. Certainly, anchoring in the European Union and in NATO is a highly important goal for our state, but we should also promote and safeguard our values. Defending these values requires using all our knowledge and experience, and the possibilities of membership of the European Union and NATO.

Today one-fourth of the world suffers from armed conflicts. Free democratic elections are still to come to half of the world nations. Even three quarters of the world nations are qualified as less developed than Lithuania in terms of democracy, economy and social security.

Does this cause the concern of Lithuania - a member of the European Union and NATO?

I believe it is our moral duty to develop and promote together with partner nations such forms of international engagement, which we ourselves could take pride in and use. We should strengthen international institutions and take an active part in their work. We should not abandon our efforts to develop the principles of solidarity and good neighbour relations and to promote a dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

Only an active, responsible and creative policy can help our state get anchored in a modern Europe and the world.

* * *

The past decade has changed not only Lithuania, but also the European Union and NATO. Today NATO is no longer only the defence alliance of shared values standing in the guard of the corner stones of Western civilization: freedom, democracy, human rights and other democratic principles. Today

other missions and tasks are proposed for its future agenda. NATO is seen as a prevention instrument, which can be used in fighting terrorism and aggressive regimes that have no regard for international norms.

The European Union is also rapidly developing its new identity. Ten years ago there was neither euro nor common security policy; there were no talks about the Constitution for Europe, the post of the European foreign minister or joint defence forces. Today the European Union changes its political, cultural and even geographic identity, and searches for new forms of economic and political influence.

Lithuania is also engaged in all these processes. Our soldiers conduct missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. Our representatives in the Union's institutions contribute to the discussions about the European security, constitutional framework and foreign and economic policy.

We have the vision of a wider, stronger and more open Europe, which is committed to transatlantic links and is building peace, stability and well being.

Today we should rather ask whether we are ready for such European integration. Will we be ready to delegate more powers to the European Union and NATO when the situation requires it? Do we have sufficient creative capacity to survive in a complicated and multifaceted network of joint institutions and collective decision making systems?

Our goal is to survive as a nation as it is defined now, in the 21st century, and not only as it was defined in the 19th century. We need to build such identity and develop such forms civil co-operation, which will help us remain strong after a qualitative transformation of the state. This is the goal that our foreign policy and our relations with the EU and NATO members first of all should target.

If we earn respect in these organizations and make our voice heard in them, the people of Lithuania would be able to take even greater pride and have more trust in their state. If we have a focused foreign policy and muster broad public support, it would be easier to achieve the desired results in Europe and defend the interests of our nation in the world.

Lithuania cannot afford a passive and responsive foreign policy. If so, Lithuania, which is just a tiny spot on the world map, might remain unnoticed even while deciding issues of vital importance to its future.

Lithuania should pursue an active and productive foreign policy. We should make public our goals and our interests, and defend them. We should make use of all our advantages. We should forge alliances with like-minded partners to make our voice well heard in the world.

This policy helped us regain independence and become a member of the European Union and NATO. This should be our policy while defending Lithuania as a subject of European and international policy.

What are the advantages of Lithuania as a member of the European Union and NATO?

First, our geographic location and experience of living at a crossroads of regions and civilizations. It opens up most probably the first opportunity in history to bridge the East and the West and make Lithuania a centre of gravity in a geographically and culturally diverse region.

We should speak more openly and loudly about regional challenges. Wherever you go, fragmentation is shocking. Industry and trade suit only narrow needs of each nation and lack a clear vision of economic interface. Differences are evident in the level of economic and social development, and in standards of democracy and civil liberties. We even have no highways running from border to border and from capital to capital. We do develop our infrastructure, but each to his own.

If we do not change this situation, we might become a God forgotten place which is visited only in case of absolute need or when the diplomatic protocol requires so.

Today the European Union is discovering “new” to it but old to us neighbours and seeks to forge closer co-operation with them. The EU-Russia partnership is marked with special dynamism. Today the EU and Russia are engaged in a dialogue on energy issues, tomorrow they may discuss common trade area and then the time may come for a visa free regime. This is a natural development. We should be at the forefront of these processes in order to defend our national interests and to avoid a situation where we are made an item of trade or other states pursue their interests at our expense.

But can we translate our ambitions for the EU's Eastern policy into serious practical steps when very few students in our universities choose to do a graduation paper on the East? How can we start a discourse on our policy in the East without a European level centre for strategic studies dedicated to Eastern policy analysis?

Internal dynamics of the European Union makes us review our relations with traditional partners and evaluate the established forms of co-operation. Many of them we would like to preserve. Some of them, including our relations with the United States, we would like to reinforce. However, while working in these directions we should not undermine the interests of the European Union or shatter the unity of its member states.

We live in Lithuania, but we are Europeans. Therefore we should look at the world through the eyes of the European Union. We should turn to those who live in extreme poverty on just a dollar a day. We should concentrate on environment pollution, abuse of human rights and unbalanced development of the world regions.

Several hundred thousand litas that Lithuania contributes today to aid and development policy, i.e. to solidarity, which we expect to get from others, is a modest contribution compared to millions channelled by the old members of the European Union. It is difficult to talk about these issues without emotions because poverty problems still persist in Lithuania. But we must talk about them. We must take more responsibility. Our politicians and our Government should address this conundrum without damaging the balance between our national needs and our international commitments.

Lithuania's new foreign policy should address all these issues.

* * *

Membership of the European Union, membership of NATO and good neighbourly relations which Lithuania declared as its three key goals at this university a decade ago, have become a doctrine, on the basis of which our state has been shaping its national policy.

Today I propose a new and wider foreign policy doctrine. My vision of Lithuania is that of a country which through the quality of its membership of the European Union and NATO and good neighbour policy has become

a leader of the region. I have a vision of Lithuania as a centre of the region, with Vilnius as a regional capital, which:

- develops old political initiatives and generates new political ideas;
- enjoys strategic partnership with Warsaw;
- proposes to the European Union practical steps for broader engagement with the East;
- is a hub of Baltic and Nordic Europe, and
- facilitates opening up Kaliningrad region and through it the whole of Russia to Europe.

This Vilnius would be a shortcut to Minsk, which is again a part of the region and of Europe.

To achieve these goals we need to pool all our resources, take on board the EU and NATO instruments and build on our experience of developing good neighbourly relations.

First, we need to review our national security policy and adapt it to the needs of the 21st century. This adaptation would help us identify our most sensitive areas requiring adequate steps. These areas are clear:

- strengthening of civil society;
- consolidation of national elite;
- reinforcement of analytical and prognostication capacities of our national security bodies;
- sustainable economic development, and
- enhancement of social cohesion.

These are the areas that shape fundamental national interests which will have a decisive impact on the tasks of Lithuania's foreign policy.

First, full integration into the European Union structures and full engagement in all formats of political, financial, economic and inter-institutional co-operation. We need to integrate in the shortest time possible into the European transport and energy networks and external border control system and to make use of all advantages offered by the common market. Membership of the European Union should help us accelerate our

economic and social growth and contribute to our cultural and intellectual development.

Second, strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance and reinforcement of the EU-NATO interface. It is especially important for Lithuania that NATO remained an effective security and defence organisation. As regards security policy, NATO and the European Union should enhance close co-operation and avoid duplication. Lithuania will seek that the United States continued to play a key role in the European security architecture.

Third, active engagement in the EU-Russia political and economic co-operation, promoting at the same time our national interests and reducing exposure of our economy and society as well as avoiding undesired influences and advancing carefully with pragmatic neighbourly policy.

Fourth, co-operation with Poland and development of relations with the Union's neighbours in the East. Our co-operation with Poland in this area would open up new possibilities and facilitate taking a broader role in the EU-US relations with Eastern European nations.

Lithuania's strategic partnership with Poland could strengthen in the future and transform into the nucleus of Nordic, Central and Eastern Europe.

Fifth, strengthening of the Baltic-Nordic solidarity and exploiting it actively in forming a deeper integrated and wider Baltic region.

Sixth, promotion of closer ties between the Kaliningrad region and Europe, and their symbiosis in order to ensure economic and social progress of this region. In this process Lithuania should seek playing the key role.

Seventh, active support of efforts that would help Belarus become a predictable, democratic and independent European state; promotion of closer ties between Belarus and the European Union and NATO in order to advance security, stability and democracy further to the East.

Eight, we see Ukraine as inseparable part of the region, of Europe, and of the European Union and NATO. We will continue to support its efforts in this direction and seek to secure greater European and transatlantic support to political, economic, social and institutional reforms in Ukraine.

Ninth, setting and pursuing ambitious goals in the United Nations, OSCE and other multilateral forums.

Tenth, finding effective ways for acting jointly with the new and the old Lithuanian émigré.

This is a long-term vision of Lithuania's foreign policy. Its implementation should start from taking very concrete steps. In other words, we should put a reviewed and renewed foreign policy on the right track.

First, we should find ways and means to influence as much as possible the taking of decisions in the European Union and NATO. Our aim is not limited to simple voting. Our goal is to take part in the development of decisions, in particular when they concern issues which are important to Lithuania. We should generate ideas and seek active participation in areas where the European Union and NATO engagement is especially strong.

Second, we should actively exploit the mechanisms of co-operation between neighbours and adapt them to our new foreign policy. The existing bilateral institutions could be transformed into trilateral forums to unite, for example, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. Contacts should be developed not only between the heads of state, but also between business people, scientists and students. Therefore, again and again I want to stress the critical importance of the highway connection between Vilnius and Warsaw, and further with Berlin and the rest of Europe.

Third, we should reinforce the capacities of the governmental institutions which are engaged in the shaping, development and implementation of the national policy vis-à-vis the neighbouring states.

And fourth, we should strengthen the analytical capacity of our state and initiate projects and studies on the key issues of our foreign policy. Lithuania needs at least one strong centre of international standing for strategic studies, which would monitor events in neighbouring countries and developments in the Euro-Atlantic area and translate positive ideas into strategic and tactical instruments.

* * *

These are the tasks that demand our immediate action. To address them we need more human, intellectual and financial resources.

We have a clear vision of our new foreign policy. We have considerable experience of implementing our policy along the lines, which should become priority lines following the accession of Lithuania to the EU and NATO. We also have the human resources, and not only here, in Lithuania, but also

in the West, the destination of emigration in the past decade, where the old émigré are still active. We all know very well that only through the concerted effort of all Lithuanian émigré across the world did we manage to achieve so rapidly the foreign policy goals in which today we take such pride and which we consider an accomplished fact. The “new” foreign policy goals and priorities, which I have outlined, can be accomplished only if we further take vigorous action and pool our efforts.

Thus, we have a vision of the country and the world in which we want to live. And it may seem that it takes just a clear understanding of the goals and tasks of the foreign policy that we implement and further work. Consistent and devoted work so that the dream of our Grand Duke Gediminas of Vilnius and of Lithuania, prominent, active, recognised and respected among us and in the world, once again comes true.

LITHUANIAN DIPLOMACY 1990-1992

Algirdas Saudargas

It is important and interesting to look at the restoration of the diplomatic service and foreign policy development trend in 1990–1992. It is useful to compare the international milieu and domestic circumstances of statehood restoration with the situation in 1918–1920.

The Government Programme of the Republic of Lithuania, drawn up on 5 October 1990, set out overall foreign policy guidelines. The top priority task raised was the reinforcement of Lithuania's independence and its return to the world community of independent nations. It was understood, even back then, that there was only one road ahead, i.e. integration into Western Europe.

Three strategic tasks of foreign policy were also defined then. The first task was about the bilateral interstate agreement with the USSR, reinforcing unconditional political independence of Lithuania. The second task was to become a full-fledged player of the European political integration in the context of the Council of Europe. The last objective was to become part of the European economic space formation.

In less than a year, i.e. in the autumn of 1991 the strategic goal of foreign policy – Lithuania's international recognition – seemed to have been achieved. Moreover, Lithuania became a full-fledged member of the OSCE (formerly CSCE); it restored its diplomatic ties with the majority of states, and joined the UN. However, further tasks of integration in the global community in the area of policy, economy and culture, were still to be accomplished.

It was the time when country foreign policy makers seeing the two union possibilities – one in the East, the other in the West – made a logical conclusion that the only logical direction for Lithuania to take was the European Community. It was then assumed that regional integration was to be considered only as a means to achieve a general move towards the EC. The forecast, as we can witness now, has proved right.

A year later, more clarity was made with regard to security issues. In the autumn of 1992 an agreement was finally reached regarding the withdrawal schedule of Russian troops. The implementation could have been prevented only by major shocks in Russia. Fortunately, no such shocks happened and the troops were successfully withdrawn. At the same time, NATO membership came gradually to be perceived as the only security guarantee, under the conditions of the polarisation between the East and the West. The polarisation still exists and there are few reasons to believe it will soon disappear.

To have a clearer insight into the background of foreign policy formation, it would be helpful to compare the situation in 1990 and 1918. Statehood restoration always involves the issue of territory and government. In the Declaration of Lithuanian Independence, signed on 16 February 1918, the Lithuanian Council declared itself as the sole representative of the Lithuanian nation. It proclaimed the restitution of the independent State of Lithuania, with Vilnius as its capital and cautiously declared that “a Constituent Assembly elected democratically by way of universal suffrage and convened at the earliest possible time shall determine the final form of the Lithuanian State and shall fix its foreign relations”.

We know well how difficult it was for the Lithuanian Council to pursue recognition of the state. Notable is the fact that it had not been denied the right of national representation and until the very convention of the Constituent Assembly remained, as maintained, the only representative of the Lithuanian nation aspiring only to make the Lithuanian state independent. All the above demonstrates the importance of initiative, as sooner or later the representation right would have been usurped by the front men of other states.

Elected in 1990, the Supreme Council, which declared the restoration of statehood on 11 March, was from the very beginning mandated to express national will. This right was also recognised by foreign states. It was not denied by the Soviet Union either. In fact, Gorbachov did not deny the right for the Supreme Council to take March 11 decisions, but only announced them to be in contradiction with the Constitution of the Soviet Union, and demanded repeal. The representatives of the Lithuanian nation, paradoxical as it might seem, took power peacefully, making use of the elections declared by the Soviet Union.

Opposite to 1918, all the government institutions were taken over in corpore, except the army, KGB and other KGB-subordinate establishments. It again confirms the importance of initiative. Had the March 11 Declaration not been adopted from the very beginning, it would have been difficult to prove that the newly elected Council was unrelated to the occupational powers. This is confirmed by the subsequent conduct of Moscow. Having lost the initiative, the Soviet authorities embarked on alternative devices. On one hand, they inspired the so called “autonomists” in the eastern part of Lithuania, seeking to create a territorial problem. On the other hand, they also tried taking power directly, which required force and the set up of a puppet “salvation committee” (events of January 1991).

The Soviets did not dare overthrow the government in Lithuania, as that would have required physical destruction or isolation. Besides, it would have entailed civilian losses. Therefore, the Soviets had to resort to delayed dual power strategy, which shortly proved pointless. Everything came to be resolved by the outcome of the August coup.

The context of the circumstances is well illustrated by the situation in the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry. Opposite to other ministries, it was to be created from scratch. Actually, some of the functions were to be maintained. For instance, the former Soviet foreign passports were still to be used. The matter was handled by the Consular Department by keeping contacts, at a practical level, with the SU Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which behaved as if nothing had happened and continued to treat the Lithuanian consular institution as a Soviet establishment until the end of the August coup. In the meantime the Lithuanian Ministry recruited the needed personnel and when the avalanche of high-ranking visits after the restoration of diplomatic relationship started in the autumn of 1991, the Ministry staff was ready to handle it.

The second issue important to the state was regarding territory. 1918 was a really difficult year. The border with Latvia was the only one established. In the west, there were problems with Klaipėda. In the east, the demarcation line, defined in the Peace Treaty of Brest Litovsk, could have been considered. The southern border was not clear at all. Therefore, we should not be too surprised that the major states, used to the Balkan wars, recognised the border between Lithuania and Poland established on the battlefield. Where the recovery of

Klaipėda was a successful, though temporary, solution, Vilnius remained a major interwar problem of the Republic of Lithuania. In fact, even though the Government of Lithuania succeeded in consolidating its aspiration of having Lithuania within its ethnographic borders and Vilnius as its capital in the Treaty of 1920 with Soviet Russia, this Treaty, along with the recovery of Klaipėda, paved the road to the borders that are currently in place.

Even though the Declaration of March 11, 1990 did not contain any specific border information, it recognised border inviolability. As a result, Lithuania, without declaring it, recognised the border lines which were actually in place during Soviet times. Lithuania was satisfied with this. Specific border lines were confirmed by bilateral agreements without any major problems. Again, it may look paradoxical, as Lithuania, having recognised the borders of the former Soviet republic, assumed a strong legal and political position. As a matter of fact, the fight of pre-war Lithuania for Vilnius and Klaipėda, lost as it was, with the onslaught of occupations, left hold ups in legal documents and political events for the Government of the restored Republic of Lithuania to make use of.

LITHUANIAN – RUSSIAN NEGOTIATIONS IN 1990-1993

Česlovas Vytautas Stankevičius*

Lithuanian negotiations attempts with the USSR in 1990-1991

Having restored its independence *de jure* on March 11, 1990, Lithuania sought to eliminate the consequences of the fifty year-long occupation by the USSR and to re-establish interstate relations between Lithuania and the USSR.

On March 13, 1990, the Supreme Council of Lithuania addressed the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev proposing the negotiations on the withdrawal of the Soviet army. Meanwhile, Gorbachev demanded that the Act on the Re-establishment of the Independence of the State of Lithuania be immediately repealed. Later, the Government of the USSR issued a new ultimatum threatening to impose strict economic sanctions on Lithuania.

On April 18, 1990, the Lithuanian Parliament offered the USSR to commence consultations regarding interstate negotiations. However, on the same day, the Soviet Union launched an economic blockade of Lithuania – cutting the supply of energy resources – which lasted until early July.

On May 16, while the USSR was still continuing its blockade, Lithuanian leaders Vytautas Landsbergis and Kazimiera Prunskienė signed the Declaration of the Parliament and the Government of Lithuania, which stated that during the period of interstate negotiations with the USSR Lithuania agrees to suspend unilateral implementation of those decisions ensuing from the documents restoring independence which could be an item of negotiations.

Gorbachev stated that he “essentially does not object to the secession of Lithuania from the USSR” but that this would require negotiations. However,

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the suspension of the Independence Act of March 11 was a precondition for their commencement.

It must be emphasised that in seeking negotiations with the USSR Lithuania held the position that the Independence Act could neither be revoked nor suspended and that the independence of Lithuania could not be the subject of negotiations or depend on their results. Lithuania also sought the signing of the protocol to open negotiations, which would acknowledge two states – Lithuania and the Soviet Union – seeking the settlement of their relations.

On June 29, the Supreme Council adopted the resolution regarding the declaration of a 100-day moratorium for new legal actions implementing the independence of Lithuania from the opening of interstate negotiations between the Republic of Lithuania and the USSR, provided that a special protocol was signed regarding their opening, aims and terms. Although Gorbachev had appraised this resolution as insufficient, the energy blockade, which had inflicted substantial damage on Lithuania, was nevertheless terminated on July 2.

On July 5, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted a resolution regarding the political and legal preparations for interstate negotiations with the USSR and initiated the formation of the Lithuanian delegation for negotiations with the USSR. On July 9, President Gorbachev approved the composition of the delegation, headed by Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikolai Ryzhkov.

The first meeting to discuss the preliminary issues took place in Kremlin October 2, 1990. The Lithuanian side sought that the goal of the negotiations would be the restoration of legal relations between two independent states.¹ However, at that time, the leadership of the USSR still hoped to retain Lithuania within the USSR by concluding a new “union agreement”. Therefore, the draft project for opening negotiations proposed by Lithuania did not correspond to its interests. The representatives of the USSR declared that Lithuania’s participation in the negotiations as an independent state was unacceptable because its status would allegedly become clear only after the negotiations.

¹ Document No. 78, *The Road to Negotiations with the USSR*, Vilnius: State Publishing Centre, 1991, 160.

The first consultative meeting took place in Kremlin October 20, 1990. The delegation of Lithuania was headed by Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania Landsbergis, the USSR delegation - by Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Ryzhkov. It was agreed to commence negotiations at the end of November.

On December 1, the heads of the parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia issued the Statement to the Fourth Congress of the People's Deputies of the USSR, which started its work in Moscow. It was proposed to recognise the independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and start negotiations with them. However, the predominant mood in the Congress was different. Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze even warned about the threat of dictatorship in the USSR and announced his resignation.

In early December, the USSR terminated negotiation consultations with Lithuania. During the first days of January in 1991, more Soviet troops were brought to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. On January 10, 1991 Gorbachev presented a new ultimatum to the Supreme Council of Lithuania demanding revocation of the main documents of Lithuanian independence, and "to immediately restore the USSR Constitution to full effectiveness."

On January 13, the military forces of the USSR began an armed aggression against Lithuania. The Soviet army murdered fourteen peaceful unarmed people in Vilnius, wounded many others, occupied the Lithuanian Television Station, the TV tower, other buildings, and held them in possession until the August putsch in Moscow in 1991.

Gorbachev approved a new delegation for the negotiations with Lithuania January 1, 1991. As previously, he continued treating Lithuania as a subordinate republic of the USSR – the mandate of the Soviet delegation allowed not more than "to discuss political, social and economic issues with the representatives of the Lithuanian SSR".

On April 4, 1991 an official consultative meeting of the delegations of both countries took place in Moscow. The principles and procedures of prospective negotiations were agreed upon and laid down in the protocol signed by the heads of the delegations – Vitalij Doguzhiev and Česlovas Stankevičius. Among the agreed principles were the following: equality of the parties, respect for the sovereignty of each country and respect for the

universally recognised principles of law. The protocol also established the goal of prospective negotiations: “regulating the relations between the Republic of Lithuania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.” This was the first step toward achieving the conditions necessary for negotiations. Although it was agreed during the meeting that the expert groups would commence preliminary work for negotiations in April, Moscow was procrastinating the opening of negotiations.

Only after the failed coup in August, the State Council of the USSR recognised the independence of the Republic of Lithuania on September 6, 1991, “with reference to the concrete historical and political situation that had been existing before the entry of the Republic of Lithuania into the USSR”,² and decided to hold negotiations with Lithuania.³ The note of 20 September of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania proposed to conduct negotiations regarding “the regulations of all consular relations arising from the *restoration* of the State independence of Lithuania”⁴ [italics by author]. By these documents the USSR *de facto* recognised the forceful incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR and the continuity of the independent Republic of Lithuania.

Lithuanian - Russian negotiations on interstate relations in 1990-1991

On June 12, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin announced the declaration of the sovereignty. Thus, an alternative to the imperial regime of the USSR emerged in Moscow. At the end of June Landsbergis received a proposal from Yeltsin to open negotiations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Since the leadership of the USSR was obviously avoiding the

² The Council is referring to the 24 December 1989 Resolution of the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR on the Political and Juridical Appraisal of the Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty, which declared the secret protocols of Molotov-Ribentrop null and void.

³ September 6, 1991 Resolution No. GS-1 of the State Council of the USSR “Regarding the Recognition of the Independence of the Republic of Lithuania”

⁴ No. KY-1569.

regulation of relations with Lithuania, this proposal created an opportunity to open parallel negotiations on the same subject with the Russian Federation. At the inception of negotiations between Lithuania and Russia, the USSR was still a real and globally influential subject of international relations with great military and nuclear power. The RSFSR had just made an alternative entry into the international relations. Therefore, the conditions for the negotiations between Lithuania and Russia for establishing the foundations of interstate relations through a fully-fledged treaty were difficult. In autumn of 1990, the Russian Federation sent a draft of the treaty between the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Federation where both republics were treated as former Soviet republics and the states that were being newly established. Lithuania was not satisfied with this draft. During the autumn of 1990 the parties have been exchanging opinions regarding the draft.

During the events of January 13, 1991 Yeltsin was acting resolutely. He arrived in Tallinn on the same day and signed, together with the heads of three Baltic States, the declaration to the United Nations and other international organisations. It was declared that the parties recognise each other's state sovereignty. All states of the world were urged to condemn decisively the military coercive actions against the independence of the Baltic States. After that the intense negotiations regarding the treaty on the foundations of interstate relations were commenced between the Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

The differences in the status of the negotiating parties and the formula of mutual recognition, which would be acceptable to both parties, were one of the main problems during the negotiations. The representatives of the RSFSR proposed to treat the parties as former Soviet republics that had legitimately declared their sovereignty and now were new sovereign states. This definition was suitable in Russian case, but was inadequate for Lithuania. The Lithuanians sought that Russia recognised the Republic of Lithuania not as a new state but as a state, which had lost its independence because of the occupation and restored its sovereignty on March 11, 1990.

As the parties had different status, it was difficult to find a symmetrical definition of mutual recognition, which would not diminish the status of the Republic of Lithuania to the status of the then RSFSR. As a result of difficult negotiations, the symmetrical formulation of the first clause of the treaty

proposed by Lithuania was adopted. This clause declared that the parties under agreement recognise each other as sovereign states in accordance to the status of their state, which is established in their constitutional acts, adopted respectively by the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic on 12 June 1990 and by the Republic of Lithuania on 11 March 1990.

The Russian delegation disagreed with the proposal of Lithuania that the treaty contained reference to the 1920 treaty between Lithuania and Russia. The Russian side did not question this treaty but objected reference to it arguing that this could give rise to territorial and border issues related to Belarus and thereby stall negotiations. The Russian side also for a long time hesitated over accepting another important Lithuanian proposal that the preamble of the treaty would reflect the fact of the annexation of Lithuania performed by the USSR in 1940 and the necessity to eliminate its consequences. In order to complete negotiations successfully, the Lithuanian delegation had to accept a compromise. Lithuania agreed to drop demands that the new treaty directly mentions the treaty of 1920. In turn, Russia agreed to state the fact of the annexation of Lithuania by the USSR in 1940 and pronounce that the USSR must eliminate the consequences of the annexation. The negotiated preamble and the first clause of the treaty meant that Russia unreservedly recognised the continuity of the Republic of Lithuania that existed prior to 1940.

On July 29, 1991, an official meeting of the state delegations of both countries under the leadership of the heads of the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Federation Landsbergis and Yeltsin took place in Moscow for the signing of the Treaty.

The Lithuanian Parliament ratified the Treaty between Lithuania and Russia on August 19, 1991, i.e. on the day when the radical forces of the USSR attempted a coup in Moscow. The Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation ratified this treaty half a year later – on January 17, 1992. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania established official diplomatic relations October 9, 1991.

Negotiations on withdrawal of the ex-Soviet troops from Lithuania

On December 24, 1991 the USSR formally ceased existing, and the Russian Federation declared itself the successor of its rights and duties.

Therefore, the duty of the USSR to eliminate the consequences of the annexation of Lithuania had devolved upon it as well. Accordingly, the withdrawal of the Soviet army, as one of the main elements in the elimination of the stated consequences, had to become the subject of new negotiations between Lithuania and Russia. The issue of reparation for damages was also to enter the agenda of negotiations. On the same day when the USSR ceased existing, the Government of Lithuania addressed the Government of the Russian Federation, proposing to resolve the issue of the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Lithuania.

On January 22, 1992, a draft copy of a standard agreement “Regarding the Legal Status and the Procedure for Withdrawal of the Armed Forces of the Former USSR Temporarily Present on the Territory of the Republic of (...)”, prepared by the Russian Federation for both the CIS and the Baltic States, was received from Moscow. The draft proposed the following: to make the temporary presence of the Soviet army units legal (until their withdrawal); allow the Soviet troops the freedom of their operations under Russian jurisdiction; guarantee the property rights of Russia to Soviet military objects; ensure the right of soldiers to citizenship of the country of their presence; provide Soviet officers with apartments, etc.

On January 31, 1992, the first negotiation meeting between the delegation of the Russian Federation under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai and the Lithuanian delegation headed by Stankevičius took place in Vilnius. The Russian side proposed to discuss the possibility of leaving certain military objects, which it considered important, on the territory of Lithuania for certain time. The Lithuanian delegation refused to discuss this option. It asserted that all army contingents must be withdrawn and all military objects must be transferred to Lithuania by the end of 1992. The Russian delegation considered this deadline unrealistic and proposed to discuss a date of 1994. Only the agreement that the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Lithuania would begin in February of 1992 and that the procedure and the final date of withdrawal would be subject to further negotiations was achieved.

From the start of negotiations with Lithuania until August of 1992, the Russian delegation was holding on to the provisions formulated in the above-mentioned “standard” draft, which was completely unacceptable to

Lithuania. There were expert meetings organised on this issue from February till April. Although negotiations were intense at that time, the Russian negotiators refused to accept Lithuanian proposals.

President Yeltsin appointed a new head of the Russian delegation on March 18, 1992 - Ambassador for Special Missions Viktor Isakov. However, it soon became clear that Russia was not ready to adjust its position and was simply deferring negotiations.

With regard to the abundant cases of the licence by Russian soldiers, the Baltic Council made a declaration on March 16, 1992. The Council stated that “the army of the former USSR continues to act as a subjugator, disregards the laws of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia <...>, and continues artillery fires and bombardments on the land and in the sea. Army units continue polluting the environment and causing damages. Illegal activities by the army, such as the sales of weapons and assets and the cutting of wood, are intensifying.” The Council demanded that Russia undertook the strictest measures to prevent the occurrence of such actions.

In May 1992, the negotiations stalled at all. Russia tried to use the same model of the relations between the “secessionist republics of the former USSR” and the Russian Federation as the successor of the rights of the USSR.

Whereas the Lithuanian position was grounded on the fact that Lithuania had never joined the USSR but had been occupied and forcibly incorporated by the USSR, therefore, all problems ensuing from it had to be resolved through the application of the principles and norms of international law.

The position regarding the Russian obligation to withdraw Soviet army from Lithuania was also diverging. The Lithuanian delegation was presuming that the immediate withdrawal of the troops from Lithuania was the duty of Russia deriving from international law and independent from the prospective agreement. Meanwhile, the Russian representatives were asserting that the obligation to withdraw the army would result from future agreements.

During the negotiations, when discussing the problems related to the withdrawal of the troops or the issues of eliminating particular consequences of the occupation, the question of responsibility was present. In the Russian view, the cause of all problems and the effects harmful to Lithuania was the totalitarian communist regime of the USSR and its institutions, which were therefore responsible for it. Russia had allegedly suffered from this regime

as well. Lithuania maintained that what had been done in Russia because of its criminal regime was a matter for its internal amenability, whereas the criminal or harmful actions of the USSR against Lithuania were a question of international amenability to another state.

Russia sought that its army be given a temporary legal status and that this army be recognised as a legal subject. Lithuania was adhering firmly to the position that the army of the USSR may not acquire a legal status of presence because it had been and continued to be an illegally present army which was the subject of the negotiations and which could not be recognised as a juridical subject. However, Lithuania recognised the fundamental human rights of the people serving in this army. Therefore, the negotiations further considered only the issues of the rights of Russian soldiers and their families but not the rights of troops.

The representatives of Russia wanted the territories controlled by the Russian troops prior to their withdrawal to be under the jurisdiction of Russia. The representatives of Lithuania did not recognise any extraterritoriality and held the position that only the laws of Lithuania and the authority of the Lithuanian government were effective on the whole territory without any exceptions.

Following international law, Lithuania issued a law on November 28, 1991, which stipulated that, the buildings and constructions used by the Soviet army belong unconditionally to the Republic of Lithuania. In the meantime, Russia was still claiming this property. Russia sought Lithuania to pay compensation for it or that it subsequently be conjointly controlled with Russia. Among other things, the Russian delegation was grounding these claims on the documents of the administration of the LSSR, treating it as a legitimate government of Lithuania. The Lithuanian delegation held the position that the government institutions forcibly imposed during the occupation by the USSR in 1944-1990, including the so-called government of the LSSR, were illegitimate. Their decision could not oblige the Republic of Lithuania and could not have any legal consequences. The USSR, as an occupying state, could not have legally acquired any property or gained any benefits in Lithuania.

Lithuania sought that the negotiations on the procedure for the withdrawal of the Russian army would also resolve the issues of reparation for damages. Among other things, Lithuania proposed that the armaments

and the military assets seized from the Lithuanian army in 1940 could be compensated with new armaments and military equipment necessary for rebuilding the defensive capacity of Lithuania. The Russian delegation did not deny the reasonableness of these claims during the negotiations.

New impulses were needed to set the stalled negotiations in motion. On April 27, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed a resolution to organise a referendum. Ninety percent of those who voted in the referendum endorsed the demand “that the withdrawal of the army of the former USSR from the territory of the Republic of Lithuania would start immediately and be completed in 1992, and that the damages done to the Lithuanian people and the Lithuanian state would be compensated”. On June 30, the Lithuanian delegation officially presented to Russia a detailed schedule for the withdrawal of all the troops of the former USSR from the territory of Lithuania by December 31, 1992.

On July 10, 1992, the OSCE Helsinki Summit Declaration regarding the withdrawal of the Soviet army from the Baltic States contained the special article 15, which demanded “to form agreements and schedules, so that the foreign army is speedily, fully and orderly evacuated from the territory of the Baltic States”. The Interpretative Statement of Lithuania regarding article 15 of the Summit Declaration, which reminded Russia that, as the successor of the rights and duties of the USSR, it had the duty of fully eliminating the consequences of the occupation of 1940, including the reparation for damages, became an official document of the Helsinki Summit.⁵

On August 6, 1992, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev posed to the ministers of foreign affairs of the Baltic States in Moscow eleven preconditions for the withdrawal of the Soviet army. Lithuania considered these requirements to be coercive, illegitimate and ungrounded, and therefore, unacceptable.

In August 1992 the parties succeeded in reaching a compromise on most of the clauses of the agreement. The first article was formulated as follows: “the Russian Federation acknowledges its international duties to withdraw the army and will carry out an organised and full evacuation of the armed forces

⁵ OSCE Helsinki Summit 1992, Interpretative Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania, Helsinki, July, 1992.

of the Russian Federation from the territory of the Republic of Lithuania by August 31, 1993 at the latest.” The Russian delegation also agreed with the clause of the agreement that provided compensation to Lithuania for the armaments and assets of the Lithuanian army seized by the USSR in 1940 and compensation for the ecological damages done by the Soviet army after December 24, 1991, when Russia assumed responsibility for the armed forces of the USSR. In the context of the entire agreement, Lithuania was entering into a compromise regarding the final date for the withdrawal of the Russian army – August 31, 1993. It also conceded that the procedure for compensation of the other part of damages inflicted by the USSR would be subject to later negotiations.

The last stage of intense negotiations with the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was completed in the Embassy of Lithuania in Moscow in the early morning of September 8, 1992. Seven separate agreements were fully co-ordinated and prepared for signing, including the agreement on the schedule for the withdrawal of the army. However, during the final meeting in Kremlin on the evening of September 8, Russia decided to sign only three documents.⁶ All agreements came into effect from the moment of their signing. As had been agreed by the parties, they were later registered in the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Four initial agreements remained unsigned. Russia declared that they could be signed in October. Lithuania conceded to this. However, on September 21, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Russian Parliament decided to advise the President of Russia to defer the signing of the remaining agreements “until they are duly prepared with regard to the rights and interests of Russia and its citizens on the territory of Lithuania”. On October 8, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia presented proposals that essentially revised the agreements of September 8.

⁶ The following were signed:

- 1) the schedule for the evacuation of the Russian army with appendixes;
- 2) agreement regarding the organisational – technical issues of the evacuation of the army;
- 3) agreement regarding the functioning of military units prior to their evacuation.

In October, Lithuania and Russia started a dialogue on the new negotiations. Russia demanded revising agreements that had already been reached. Lithuania refused to negotiate them. As a matter of fact, the agreements signed on September 8 were sufficient and they were being implemented. On November 25, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the resolution “The Full Evacuation of Foreign Armed Forces from the Territory of the Baltic States”, which was initiated by the Baltic States. The United Nations thereby welcomed “the recent agreements on the full evacuation of the foreign army from Lithuania” and urged the formation of agreements, including schedules, on the withdrawal of the army from Latvia and Estonia. By this resolution, the United Nations *de facto* recognised that the agreements formed in September 1992 between Lithuania and Russia regarding the schedule and the procedure for the withdrawal of the army were sufficient. Therefore, the subsequent attempts by Russia to speculate on the sufficiency of the signed agreements were deprived of any formal basis.

On October 29, President Yeltsin signed a decree for temporary suspension of the withdrawal of the Russian army from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. However, on November 5, the president, in a letter to Landsbergis, “clearly and unambiguously” confirmed the Russian intention to withdraw the army from the territory of Lithuania. The Russian president explained that the decision to temporarily suspend the withdrawal of the army was dictated by the internal problems of Russia. He also suggested speeding up the co-ordination of the remaining unsigned agreements on the withdrawal of the army. In a reciprocal letter on November 12, Landsbergis noted that the agreements co-ordinated on September 8 contained “mutually acceptable and balanced solutions”. He also noted that new Russian proposals were “significant enough to essentially influence the whole complex of agreements that had been reached with great difficulty and may even exceed their confines”.

The withdrawal of the Russian army continued intensively during the last quarter of 1992. 78 per cent of the Russian armed forces planned in the signed schedule for withdrawal in 1992 were withdrawn from Lithuania by the end of 1992.

There were no real unresolved issues remaining between Lithuania and Russia in relation to the withdrawal of the army. Therefore, the adjustment

of the clauses of the so-called main agreement, which had been negotiated but unsigned, became irrelevant at the beginning of 1993. However, Russia continued demanding amendments, which would eliminate the reference to the international duty of Russia, to grant the legal status of presence to the withdrawn army prior to its withdrawal, to recognise Russian property rights to the real estate used by the former Soviet army etc.

On April 27, 1993, a new Lithuanian delegation was formed for the negotiations with Russia. Upon Moscow's request, a meeting between the delegations took place in Vilnius at the end of May. However, no agreement was reached regarding the amendments demanded by Russia. Therefore, the political pressure from Russia increased. In mid-July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Povilas Gylys was invited and visited Moscow. On July

29, President Yeltsin invited the President of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas to visit Moscow on August 2. Russia desired that in the course of this visit the so-called main agreement regarding the withdrawal of the Russian army from Lithuania be signed with the amendments requested by Russia. However, it was virtually impossible to organise the proposed visit of the Lithuanian president within just a few days.

On August 20, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared once again that Russia had decided to suspend the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Lithuania. This was the last attempt pressuring the Lithuanian government to change its position. Moscow proposed a new date for the meeting of the presidents of both states in Moscow – August 23, i.e. the date of signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop protocols. The visit of the Lithuanian president did not take place.

On August 31, 1993, the last military echelon of Russia crossed the state border of Lithuania. Russia honourably fulfilled one of the two international duties that devolved upon it with regard to eliminating the consequences of the half-century occupation of Lithuania by the USSR – withdrawal of the occupation army. The second duty – reparations for damages inflicted on Lithuania and its population by the occupation – is still open for further negotiations.

LITHUANIA, A MEETING PLACE OF EUROPE*

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis

2004 was a historic year for Lithuania. For the first time, Lithuania celebrated the National Day as a full-fledged member of the European Union and NATO. However, Euro-Atlantic integration has brought us to a world that still remains rather unfamiliar to us. It seems that everything is important and everything has to be achieved immediately.

It is not easy to distinguish new priorities in this context. The transformed realities have somewhat discouraged our political ambitions. It is still hard to believe that Lithuania as a member of both the European Union and NATO could aspire to a more significant role in the region, Europe and the world.

I believe that this will soon be in the past. Lithuania is growing. Lithuania is rapidly consolidating by understanding more clearly its geopolitical situation, its “permanent interests”. The firmer our grip on these interests, and the clearer our understanding, the stronger our policy will be, which will now be developed not just for the next decade but for the next twenty or thirty years.

What would these permanent interests of Lithuania be? Lithuania emerged from the aspiration of its people to belong in Europe, to be part of the integrated area of shared values. This aim has not changed much over the centuries. It remains important at the present as well. We already belong to the European Union and NATO.

However, have European values been firmly established in Lithuania?

It is not just the events of the recent years that make us ask this question. It is constantly being raised by Lithuanians who contrast the living standards

* This article was prepared on the basis of the speech, which was delivered by Lithuanian Foreign Minister H. E. Mr. Antanas Valionis during the meeting of the heads of the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania on 7th of July 2004.

here and in Europe. It is raised by political scientists who observe the social and political processes in Lithuania.

It seems that there is still not enough Europe in Lithuania. There is not enough of it in our minds and in our daily activities. We are still saying: “they, the European Union” or “they, NATO”. Although both the European Union and NATO – are us.

This ambiguity is characteristic not only of Lithuania. Let’s look at our closest neighbours – some of them do not even belong to the Euro-Atlantic structures. There is not enough Europe beyond Lithuania’s borders. Therefore, the existential puzzle of Lithuania has not yet been resolved either.

On the other hand, it is not enough to merely belong to Europe. We may recall the past when Lithuania was part of Europe but not quite as Lithuania.

At times, we may still hear admonishments: you came, joined, so you better keep quiet, settle down and let the more experienced speak.

Lithuania must preserve its identity in Europe. It must earn the respect and recognition of partners; our national values must be respected and our national interests must be heeded.

In this sense, there is not enough Lithuania in Europe yet. There is a lack of policies which would make others regard our state with respect and turn to it for its opinion or advice. There is a lack of understanding that events taking place in Lithuania or nearby have an impact on the entire continent.

This understanding can be created only by us – through our own activities, our own ideas and initiatives.

All of this defines the key long-term goals of Lithuania:

First – to create Europe in Lithuania, to raise the level of welfare, and to entrench European values in both domestic and foreign policies.

Second – to expand the boundaries of Europe and surround Lithuania with free, democratic, European states on all sides.

Third – to strengthen the international authority of Lithuania and increase its economic, political and cultural influence.

Interim president Artūras Paulauskas has proposed a concept that combines these three aims – the idea of the regional centre. Lithuania would aim to strengthen its role in the region through the quality of EU and NATO membership and the active development of neighbourly relations. Lithuania would become a certain centre of gravity in the region, and Vilnius would be the capital of the region.

This idea has been received equivocally. Some have discerned links with the history of our state; others desiderated a stronger European or transatlantic emphasis.

We still have a long way to go before we fully comprehend the needs and the tasks of our state. However, at the moment, the concept of the regional centre is likely the only one that links our Euro-Atlantic present with the future of the state and provides our policies with ambition and solidity.

What is required for Lithuania to become the regional centre?

First – internal resources. A stable political system, competitive economy, social cohesion and professional institutions are required. Membership in the European Union and NATO will help to resolve these issues faster and more successfully. Our goal is that Lithuania becomes a strong state that creates its own future and the future of Europe.

Second – recognition. Partners and, first of all, regional partners must acknowledge the significance of Lithuania and seek co-operation with our state. Lithuania must become a kind of symbol of the European Union and NATO which other states would aim to measure up to. We must act constructively and far-sightedly, suggest concrete solutions to our partners, and follow European values in our actions. We must form active policies in the region, the European Union and NATO.

Third – influence. Lithuania must create an open economy, expand trade and increase investment in neighbouring countries. We must also promote our culture more so that others can admire it and become motivated to learn the Lithuanian language, thereby absorbing the European values and European heritage.

Fourth – geographic space. Lithuania has so far usually been seen as part of the tiny Baltic region. Having once separated Northern and Central Europe, we have not yet acquired a wider geographic identity. Therefore, we

must expand the Baltic region's interaction with the northern, southern and eastern neighbours, so that through closer relations the strategic significance of Lithuania will increase as well.

Fifth – infrastructure. We need highways running from border to border. Our capacities for cargo and transit must be expanded. A centre is primarily the point of crossing – a meeting place. Lithuania must become a place where roads from the North and the South, the East and the West meet. In this regard, I feel that the most neglected link is between Vilnius and Warsaw.

Sixth – international environment. We need harmonious relations between the USA and the European Union, which would give Lithuania the opportunity to become a beacon of Western values in the presence of another civilisation, another culture. Lithuania needs a strong European Union and a strong NATO because this would increase its own authority. Whereas the democratic development of Russia and its tighter partnership with the Western world would provide Lithuania with new opportunities to increase its influence in the region and in Europe.

The building of a regional centre raises the following short-term goals for the diplomatic service of Lithuania:

First – to use all the opportunities accorded by membership in the EU and NATO to strengthen the Lithuanian state, society, economy and culture. Joining the Euro and the Schengen agreement, the introduction and implementation of European standards in the area of border control, competition and public administration, the implementation of NATO standards in the national defence system – all of this strengthens our state, reduces its vulnerability and opens new opportunities for development. We must constantly remind other Lithuanian institutions about these opportunities, encourage them to join European co-operation as soon as possible and help them, as much as possible, in taking the first steps.

Second – we must integrate smoothly into the European Union and NATO policy-making. The rules of the game must be used actively and skilfully in defending the interests of Lithuania. Over the last ten years, we have proved more than once that Lithuanians are tough, but good, negotiators. We must preserve this standard.

Third – we must expand Lithuania’s trade with the neighbouring countries and increase the volume of Lithuanian investment there. For this purpose, we must use the support of the European Union and NATO, as well as all available international instruments. Free trade agreements with Eastern European countries, their integration to the four freedoms area, their membership in the global trade system – these are just few examples of how we could approach this task.

Fourth – we must strengthen cultural relations with our neighbours and channel resources of the state and the European Union to cultural exchange programmes and international studies in Lithuanian universities. Lithuania must have a stronger presence in the neighbouring countries, while Lithuania and the region must have a stronger presence in the world. Communities of expatriates could also be involved in this activity. Lithuanian schools, Lithuanian organisations and Lithuanian charitable work abroad could embody Lithuania, Europe and the region.

Fifth – we must initiate and establish new forms of regional co-operation, encompassing Northern, Central and Eastern European countries. This would redefine the identity of the region and enable escaping the geographical framework imposed during the interwar period. In this regard, the geographical position of Lithuania is particularly advantageous, while the accumulated experience in neighbourly and regional co-operation is very useful. The strategic partnership with Poland, the Nordic-Baltic cooperation, the institutional partnership of Lithuania and Ukraine – all of these could be further developed by including new areas and new partners and forming a co-operation area interlinked with mutual relations.

Sixth – we must actively support the policy of the expansion of the European Union and NATO. It is the only way for our neighbours that remain outside the European Union and NATO to join Europe and become established in it. Our interest is Ukraine’s membership in the European Union and NATO. Our hope is that Belarus will return to the path of democracy and tie its future to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Our aim is the organic integration of the Kaliningrad region into Europe, as well as its – and Russia’s – openness to Euro-Atlantic co-operation. We must turn the European Neighbourhood Policy into an effective instrument for the integration of these countries into Europe. We must also strengthen

Lithuania's support for the spread of European vales in the region and in the world. In this area, our development and assistance policy still does not perform the role it could.

Seventh – we must connect Lithuania to Europe and the capitals of the states in the region. Lithuania has almost completed its homework. It is time that we turn to our neighbours and, first of all, to our strategic partner Poland with concrete proposals. Private resources, European and international funds, and budgetary subsidies could be made available. What particular projects could we place on the negotiation table? We should also discuss the conditions of transit through Lithuania, and constantly alert Lithuanian institutions to the issues of logistics, including the development of seaports. The diversity of the supply of energy resources is a separate topic which must be included into the agendas of the European Union, NATO and other international structures.

Eighth – we must promote transatlantic relations. There is nothing and, in the nearest future, there probably will not be anything that can replace the transatlantic partnership. Our capacity to defend against terrorism, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and meet other contemporary challenges is limited without the USA. However, the United States also depend on support of the European states. Lithuania must strengthen transatlantic co-operation and support the adjustment of NATO to contemporary needs. In this area, we must build up not only the administrative and military but also the intellectual capacity of Lithuania.

Ninth – it is important to promote dialogue between the European Union and NATO and Russia, and take an active part in it. This dialogue is useful for Lithuania, but it must be transparent and guided by shared values. In this area, we must continue the pragmatic neighbourhood policy.

Tenth – we must strengthen Lithuania's authority through representation in international organisations and participation in international programmes and peacekeeping operations. We hope that Lithuania will be elected to the UN Economic and Social Committee and, in 2014-2015, to the UN Security Council, and will preside over the OSCE in 2010-2011. These activities, as well as adherence to international norms and their protection, increase Lithuania's trustworthiness and open opportunities for new initiatives.

These ten points underline what is most important for our state at this stage of development. The more successful we are in their implementation, the more Europe there will be in Lithuania and the more Lithuania in Europe, and the more advantageous will be the entwinement of Euro-Atlantic and national interests.