

Lithuania's Winter of Discontent, 2002-3:



Graffiti on the side of the Lithuanian parliament from the 1991 independence campaign

Presidential Elections Produce an Upset

Introduction

Lithuania held the first round of its third post-independence presidential elections on 22nd December, 2002. A deciding round followed on 5th January, 2003, when the incumbent, Valdas Adamkus, faced Rolandas Paksas, a former prime minister and ex-mayor of the capital, Vilnius. Contrary to universal predictions by the pollsters as well as local and international media, the sitting president was ejected from office. Perhaps the world should not have been surprised by the result, but the fact that expectations were so different from reality in Lithuania suggests that much of what has been written about the transition from communism to capitalism there (as elsewhere in the post-Soviet bloc) needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Turnout was low in both rounds - 53.45% (22nd December), 52.25% (5th January) - indicating the overall disillusionment with politics and politicians in this small Baltic nation, but Paksas won by a clear margin: 54.91% against Adamkus's 45.09%.

According to the Lithuanian constitution the president has few powers but, even a predominantly figurehead presidency can be the focus for power broking and political influence, as the British Helsinki Human Rights Groups (BHHRG) has noted in countries with similar rules, like the Czech Republic. The Lithuanian President's signature is required on a host of public appointments as well as parliamentary and government decisions.

Even if the post is primarily representative, Paksas's surprise election to the presidency of Lithuania had a wider significance than just an upset in local politics. It represents something of a snub to the West as Adamkus was slated to win big due to his success in steering the country into gaining invitations in 2002 to join both NATO and the European Union. These developments were presented by a docile media as hugely popular in the small Baltic state. In turn this upbeat picture was rebroadcast in the West itself.

Local elections were also held on 22nd December in tandem with the presidential poll. This was a new development, according to the CEC in Vilnius, aimed at boosting participation, which has been

consistently low. The ruling ex-Communists, now renamed the Social Democrats, came first with 21% with the Farmers & New Democracy Party coming second. Both election results indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the ruling elite in Lithuania.

BHHRG observed voting in both rounds of the Lithuanian presidential election. This was an unusual move as the monitoring of human rights in the Baltic States (election observation included) has been downgraded by international human rights organizations. The OSCE closed its missions in neighbouring Estonia and Latvia in 2001 and has stopped observing elections in the Baltic States. However, with EU membership on the horizon, BHHRG thought it appropriate to visit the Baltic States on the eve of their accession to Europe. While in the region, the Group's representatives also visited the neighbouring Russian enclave of Kaliningrad whose future is much discussed at the time of writing.

Background

In the late eighties Lithuania gained universal recognition as the plucky David who stood up to the Communist Goliath of the Soviet Union. The bloody confrontation at Vilnius's television station on 13th January 1991 between opponents of the Communist regime and Russian troops reportedly left 13 dead and was deemed to be one of the catalysts that brought down the mighty Soviet state.¹

Unlike neighbouring Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania is a relatively ethnically homogeneous state – over 80% of its population are Lithuanian, while Latvia has c. 40% and Estonia c. 30% former Soviet citizens, brought in during the 1950s and 60s to augment the local work force. Independence from the Soviet Union seemed to come naturally to Lithuania as the Communist Party's hold weakened during the Gorbachev years. However, there were peculiarities about the sudden resurgence of nationalism in the Baltic States which not only played a central part in the events that took place between 1988 and 1991, but also still resonate today.



A painting from the Soviet era of the Estonian Song Festival

For one thing, why did it take nearly 50 years for the three Baltic States to decide that their cultures were being swamped by Sovietization, as was claimed during the fight for independence? Also, it was not entirely true to say that they had been 'swamped': Soviet policy allowed an, admittedly constrained, expression of nationalist sentiment. Local languages were spoken and taught and folk culture encouraged. For example, the large-scale Baltic song festivals which were given worldwide publicity in the Perestroika period took place under Soviet rule in the decades after 1944. Lithuanian language and

¹ For accounts of events leading to independence, see Richard J. Krickus "Showdown: The Lithuanian Rebellion and the Breakup of the Soviet Empire", Brassey's, London, 1997; Anatol Lieven, "Baltic Revolution" Yale, 1993

literature were studied at Vilnius University and, paradoxically, many more Lithuanian language books were published during the Soviet period than today! Until 1990 the average print run of Lithuanian language fiction was 5000 to 10,000 copies, non-fiction, 1000-1500, poetry, 500-1000. According to the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, the numbers have now halved. Fewer people read, and, many, can't afford to buy books any more.²

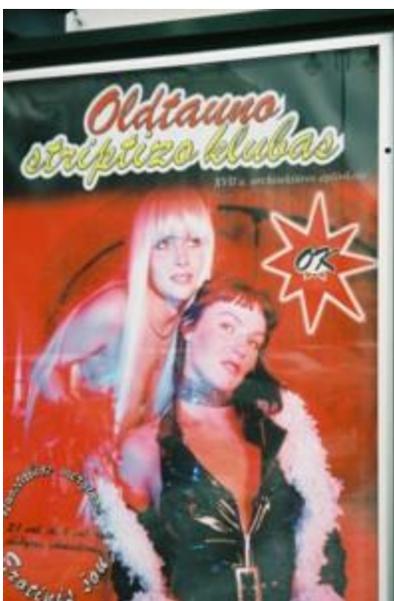
The inconsistencies involved in the quest for national independence were compounded by the fact that most protagonists were leading Communists who broke ranks with the Party to form the independence movement, *Sajudis*. Even Vytautas Landsbergis, the music professor who emerged from academic oblivion to lead *Sajudis*, was later accused of connections to the KGB, as were other independence leaders, like the first prime minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene. 12 years on, many of these people still play a leading role in Lithuanian politics.

But enthusiasm for the radicals who had led the independence drive soon waned. By 1992, Lithuania was in a parlous economic state. Both its agricultural and industrial sectors had collapsed - almost overnight - and fuel supplies from neighbouring Russia were regularly interrupted. People were plunged into poverty. Whatever support there had been for the vocal nationalists in 1991 waned with astonishing rapidity. Politically, this resulted in the election of the former Communists now re-formed as the Social Democrat Party (LSDP) in elections held that year as people sought respite from the excesses of the free market. The party's leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, became president in 1993. This situation - a shifting of power between right and left - has been the norm in Lithuanian politics ever since. When it became apparent that the Social Democrats were unable to improve the economy either, Conservative parties were elected back to office in 1996. Again in 2000, the electorate voted the Social Democrats back into power in another (forlorn) attempt to improve their situation. Similar shifts of power have occurred in other post - communist countries.

By the mid-1990s, Lithuania, a country of only 3 million people had a plethora of small political parties, many having splintered from their larger brothers. There is the Centre Union, the Social Liberals, the Liberal Union and, also, 3 Christian Democrat parties even though the main entity, the Homeland Union (Conservatives) of Vytautas Landsbergis barely scraped into parliament in the 2000 elections. The LSDP is the only party with any serious grass roots, no doubt, having co-opted many former Communist Party activists. Because of the profusion of small, similar-sounding entities ordinary people have ultimately engaged with politics via those personalities who made some impact on the public stage. The successful presidential candidate Rolandas Paksas was one such person.

Lithuania 2002: Society and the Economy

² Geoffrey Vasiliauskas, "Publishing industry fights to survive", *The Baltic Times* (13-19th June, 2002)



According to the poster, this "Oldtauno striptizo klubas" is located in a historic XV11 century building

It seems strange that, in spite of its heroic struggle to escape from the clutches of the Soviet Union, Lithuania sought the embrace of other multinational bodies as soon as it gained independence.³ On the one hand, security was sought within NATO while the country's economic future was deemed to be brightest in the EU. It is important to note that all political parties and major personalities agree with this policy. As the demands made on members of the EU and NATO are clear-cut as well as stringent, room for manoeuvre within the Lithuanian political space has been effectively reduced since invitations to join both organizations were issued in late 2002 - immediately before the presidential elections.

Lithuania is situated in an important strategic position for the West as well as being an export portal for the Russian energy market. It is regularly 'talked up' as an economic success story, but the macroeconomic statistics hide the real situation of a permanent trade deficit where imports regularly account for nearly twice as much as exports e.g. in the period August 2001 – August 2002 exports grew by 4.6% while imports were up 9.4%.⁴ Exports are basically energy and transit fees as well as textiles. However, less and less is produced in Lithuania and pressure from the EU and the WTO over alleged dumping - of fertilizers and TV tubes, for example, and of vinyl thread in 2002 - points to more pressure on exports in the future.⁵ Unemployment is high. Entry into the EU will also oblige the country to increase prices for energy and fuel and, although much is made of the opening of markets to the West, it is difficult to see what exactly Lithuania could sell to the saturated Western consumer market.

Western media routinely assert that the Baltic States, Lithuania included, are becoming IT centres with everyone from peasants to stockbrokers 'logged on' and using the internet to lighten the load of everyday life and increase business efficiency. The frequency of power cuts in Lithuania's second city, Kaunas, ought to counsel caution about accepting the myth of a digitalised Baltics. In fact, during BHHRG's stay in Lithuania (and for much of the time on a mission to Estonia) it was difficult to gain access to the world-wide web. The telephone system is too old-fashioned to cope and access to internet servers is arcane. For instance, Lithuania does not even have a dial-up address for major global servers like AOL.

³ Alfred Erich Sen, "*Lithuania Awakening*", University of California Press, 1990. Professor Sen dwells at great length on the Lithuanians' desire for "economic self-sufficiency".

⁴ *Lithuanian Weekly* (13th December, 2002)

⁵ "Lithuanian-Russian Trade Relations and EU Integration" prepared by Geoffrey Parish, "*The Free Market*", 2000, No.4

There are some success stories. For example, the Lithuanian-owned supermarket chain, Maxima, which has a large number of stores, including hypermarkets, and which has also managed to expand into neighbouring Latvia with plans to go even further a-field. However, a future take-over by a Western buyer is a strong probability which could end the stores' policy of purchasing foodstuffs and dairy products from local suppliers which has, so far, helped to keep the Lithuanian farming sector afloat.⁶ The sale of the country's 4 major sugar refineries to the Danish company Danisco Sugar is a case in point. Lithuanian sugar beet growers have since not been able to sell their products at a competitive price.⁷

Otherwise, new businesses tend to employ a few hundred here and there but nothing to significantly impact upon the large numbers of unemployed in the country.⁸

Despite aspirations to join the EU with its renowned Social Chapter, publicists for Lithuania boast about its harsh new legislation nullifying workers' rights. Passengers on Lithuanian Airlines in December, 2002, could read in the in-flight magazine that under the new labour code "the employer will be able to terminate an employment contract for any reason he feels fit." The reader is assured, "The employer... now has the legal grounds for controlling, encouraging and imposing penalties on employees!"⁹

NATO: NATO membership does not come cheap. The Alliance demands that member states should contribute 2% of their national budgets to defence spending – In Lithuania's case one billion litas (€290m.) annually. The country has already started to comply with this requirement by purchasing 60 Stinger missiles from the US for \$34 m.¹⁰ But many people wonder who, exactly, is the enemy? Even journalists who support the government in Vilnius admit there is a problem: "Most Baltic leaders sidestep the questions about why they want into NATO, with the alliance discouraging them from having Russia as a potential future threat. Officially, governments say they want in 'to contribute to European security'".¹¹ Even President Adamkus added to the confusion saying "I reject this philosophy that Russia's the enemy waiting to invade Western Europe ...Those days are over".¹² And, in his campaign newspaper, *Už prezidentą*, Mr. Adamkus includes a cosy portrait of himself with Russia's Vladimir Putin (alongside a rogues' gallery of NATO leaders) to emphasise the point.¹³

Official NATO policy also denies that Russia is a potential threat and George W. Bush met Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg hours before visiting Vilnius in November 2002 as if to underscore the point. Surely, if NATO wanted to ensure the security of small, poor countries like Lithuania it could be done without burdening them with unnecessary military expenditure? The feeling is bound to arise that NATO enlargement is intimately connected with boosting the Western defence industry. On 18th November TIME magazine admitted that one of the pluses of NATO enlargement was for "Western weapons manufacturers to win a few more clients as the new members upgrade their systems to NATO".¹⁴

However, Lithuania's importance to NATO may be more closely connected with the central monitoring station in Karmelava, 100 km. west of Vilnius, from where BaltNet can track any aircraft in Baltic airspace. "The \$100 million system — funded by the U.S. and Norway — enables the mixed Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian crews to monitor planes flying over Russia's nearby, heavily militarized, enclave of Kaliningrad. "The Russians probably don't like that," shrugs Second Lieut. Rimantas Rudnickas, a Lithuanian member of the BaltNet team". That's probably an understatement. Last month, the Russian

⁶ "Brutus Maximus" *Baltic Times* (May 30-June 5, 2002)

⁷ *East European Constitutional Review*, Winter/Spring, 2002, www.law.nyu.edu/eecr

⁸ For example, Ochoco, an Oregon-owned company employs 148 people at its factory in western Lithuania, see "Ochoco Lumber makes grade in Lithuania" *Baltic Times*, (14-20 November, 2002)

⁹ See Donatas Zdanavicius, "The New Labour Code" in *Lithuania in the World 10* (2002), 45.

¹⁰ See "Guns before Butter in the Baltic States" www.oscewatch.org 6/11/02

¹¹ "NATO to the Baltic States: 'Your're In!'" *City Paper*, January/February, 2003, www.BalticsWorldwide.com

¹² Michael Tarm "Mr. Nice Guy" *City Paper* op. cit.

¹³ See "Sekmes garantas _ vakarietiska patirtis" in *Už prezidentą*, page 4

¹⁴ James Geary, *Time Magazine*, November 18, 2002

daily *Vremya Novostei* described the network as the "Pentagon's eye," implying that BaltNet would be used for espionage. Though the radar system isn't hooked up to NATO's grid yet, it could be very soon".¹⁵ Countries like Lithuania will also provide more foot soldiers for participation in future US-led wars against 'rogue states' - troops have recently been sent to join Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

President Adamkus ran for office in 2002 on a strong pro-NATO platform. On 22nd November 2002, George W. Bush visited Lithuania as part of a swing through Eastern Europe to welcome the Baltics into NATO. He appeared in public with Mr. Adamkus and the other two Baltic presidents for a photo opportunity that was evidently seen as a boost to his electoral prospects. And, that is how the event was presented in the US press which drooled over "the cheers of thousands of Lithuanians in City Hall Square" chanting "*aciu, aciu*" – Lithuanian for 'thank you' at President Bush.¹⁶

However, the sycophantic reports in the US media were not entirely accurate. Although it was reported that "tens of thousands were there" in fact, only 5,000 tickets to the event were taken up out of 20,000 on offer. There seemed to be less than fierce interest on the part of Lithuanians – at least those in the capital – for the chance to see their president in the flesh, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the "leader of the free world." As Bruno Kaspar, a lawyer and editor of the German-language *Baltische Rundschau* newspaper and Swiss Honorary Consul in Lithuania, told BHHRG: "Bush came here with empty statements and people realized this. Adamkus thought Bush's visit would help him and it didn't."¹⁷

EU: Among the Baltic countries, Lithuania is regarded as the most enthusiastic for membership of the EU. So much so, that its referendum on entry is to be held first, in May 2003, presumably to make it difficult for Estonia and Latvia to say no once the expected 'yes' vote is secured next door.

BHHRG spoke to voters around the time of the election about their primary concerns. While none were wildly enthusiastic about the prospect of membership, several people – particularly those of student age – saw accession to the EU as their only hope for finding work that could pay enough to provide a living wage. BHHRG talked to young taxi drivers who had travelled many times to places like France and Germany to work illegally as attendants in parking lots or fun-fairs because there was simply not enough work available to them in Lithuania. BHHRG was even told of an estimated 50,000 minors who had gone to the EU in search of work. Older people worried about the instability of their current jobs, saying they could expect no pensions and saw little hope for the future based on visible opportunities.

Members of the Group also visited two EU information and documentation offices in Vilnius – one in the *Seima* building, another near the city's Tolerance Centre. However, these modern, well-designed offices - the one in the *Seima* boasted a row of up-to-date computers - were both empty. Perhaps local Lithuanians find these repositories of official propaganda a little too reminiscent of the 'Lenin Corners' which existed in Soviet schools and factories where people could study their Communist texts and other suitable literature in an atmosphere of tranquility.

While EU entry is supposed to create jobs and opportunities, it will also probably lead to the collapse of even more economic activity as enterprises fail to meet stringent EU hygiene and safety requirements. Agriculture will suffer further: EU subsidies for the new member states have been set at one quarter of those received by the current members. They will also be calculated on the basis of a 'target year', deemed by the EU to be 1998. In other words, subsidies will be paid to Lithuanian farmers based on agricultural production in their worst recent year when exports to Russia collapsed during the Russian financial crisis.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Time Magazine*, op. cit

¹⁶ Elisabeth Bumiller, " 'Ah-choo!' How Bush connected with the Lithuanians" *International Herald Tribune* (26th November, 20002)

¹⁷ See *Baltische Rundschau*, December 2002-January, 2003

¹⁸ "EU stumbles over enlargement farm aid" *AFP*, 13th June, 2002

Lithuanian politicians talk airily of the benefits the country will receive from EU structural funds. But according to the *Lithuanian Business Review* "Future member states, such as Lithuania will not receive the money they expect from the EU's regional and cohesion funds over the coming years".¹⁹ The EU is not as rich as it once was, and much funding for upgrading infrastructure, anyway, goes back to Western companies and consultants who are adept at landing the lucrative contracts for improving things like water, sewage and pollution in member states.

EU & Ignalina: The EU has always stated that the accession of former Communist states would involve closure of their Soviet-era nuclear reactors. However, there is much unease about the terms on offer to close the Ignalina nuclear power plant in north-eastern Lithuania as it provides up to 80% of the country's electricity as well as supporting a town, Visaginas, of 45,000 people.

The EU has consistently demanded the closure of the facility as its two Soviet-built RBMK reactors are similar to those used at Chernobyl. The first reactor would shut down in 2005, the second in 2009. However, many experts disagree about the supposed dangers to safety and, the EU itself has spent some \$222m. upgrading the plant over the past 10 years.

Closure of Ignalina seems almost inevitable after agreements were entered into at the December 2002 Copenhagen summit which earmarked the largest per capita funding to Lithuania among the EU candidates to assist with the plant's shut down. Aware of the public disquiet over the planned closure, President Adamkus promised to try to persuade the Europeans to construct a new plant.²⁰ However, such a development is anything but assured. For one thing, the EU simply does not have the money to do this. Also, in May 2002, neighbouring Finland approved the construction of a new nuclear power plant which could handily provide the Baltic States with energy.²¹ Some even suspect that safety fears have been exaggerated to the future benefit of Western power companies.

A similar situation has arisen in Bulgaria where the first reactors at the Kozloduy nuclear power plant were closed at the end of December 2002. Three weeks later, it was announced that British Nuclear Fuels had won the contract to dismantle Kozloduy – a satisfactory outcome, at least for the British company which had been losing so much money at home that it was seeking government bailouts.²² Both Bulgaria and Lithuania will pay more for their electricity in future and, in the case of Lithuania, lose a valuable source of export revenue as electricity from Ignalina is sold to neighbouring Latvia, Kaliningrad and Belarus.

BHHRG visited Visaginas on 22nd December during the first round of the presidential election. It is a gaunt, Soviet town whose inhabitants are connected, directly or indirectly, with employment at the plant. There was a definite sense of gloom and people told the Group that they were resigned to the plant's closure and saw no hope for their future.²³ In Klaipeda, the BHHRG's representative was told that people feared price rises for energy when Ignalina closed – it was a reason why Mr. Adamkus lost support. On 7th January, some shops and most restaurants in Klaipeda were shut due to shortages of electricity and heating. The past winter has been the coldest in the region since 1979.

Unemployment: Certainly, it is difficult to see exactly how the unemployed from Ignalina could be satisfactorily reintegrated into the labour force. Officially, unemployment in Lithuania is decreasing – at the moment, it stands at c. 14%. But, official figures (meaning those who register with the authorities) aren't necessarily indicative of the situation on the ground in the former Communist bloc. As BHHRG was told in Poland in 2001, many people do not bother to register as benefits are small and irregularly paid.

¹⁹ *Lithuanian Business Review*, 2002/09 – 10 November-December, 2002

²⁰ See *RFE/RL*, 23/9/02

²¹ "Finland to Spur Global Renaissance for Nuclear Power" *AFP*, May 23, 2002, www.spacedaily.com

²² "BNFL Environmental services Wins Contract with Bulgaria" www.novinite.com (19th January, 2003)

²³ Geoffrey Visaginas, "Life in a post Ignalina town" in *Baltic Times*, September 12-28, 2002

Also, they only register those who once had a job. During BHHRG's journey around Lithuania in winter 2002-3, lack of work was obviously people's main concern. Everywhere the Group went it was the same story "there was a factory here, but it closed". In Klaipeda BHHRG was told that unemployment in the port city stood at c.25%.

Average monthly income is 432.1 litas (€ 125.2) per month but 756 litas per month are needed to maintain a decent standard of living. In the third quarter of 2002 utility prices rose by 1%.²⁴ Officially, there are c. 120,000 people with a monthly income of less than \$38 who receive benefits. However, there are many politicians on the right who want to remove this safety net and as the EU will be looking for cuts in public spending and the privatisation of the health service these small crumbs are likely to be removed.

People writing about Lithuania in the late 80s presented an idyllic picture of a fertile and productive countryside.²⁵ But, agriculture has now more or less collapsed; weeds grow on once fertile fields – grain is now imported from Russia and Ukraine. There are no farm animals in sight. Although the country, like the other Baltic States, has fought to increase quotas for dairy produce under EU regulations, it is impossible to imagine either country producing enough milk etc. to fulfil what they have already. 5 meat processing plants are to be allowed to export to the EU, while the workings of the internal market and absence of tariffs will mean more foodstuffs are imported into the country than ever.

While the propaganda extols Lithuania's amazing economic progress, other statistics paint a somewhat different picture. For example, the country now has the highest suicide rate in the world – 44 out of every 100,000.²⁶ Added to which, those with professional qualifications leave to work abroad as there are limited opportunities for scientists, computer technicians etc. to find work.²⁷ Few return. A "flood" of Lithuanian immigrants has been reported in Germany – every 10th foreigner detained in the country is Lithuanian. The Germans have also complained of their connections with the underworld in activities such as car theft and cigarette smuggling.²⁸

Emigration: This situation has meant that the population of Lithuania has reduced dramatically since independence, both through lowering birth rates and emigration.²⁹ While those with a higher education can find permanent work abroad, particularly in the US through contacts with the Lithuanian diaspora, others work as cheap labour in Western Europe in farms, restaurants etc.³⁰ As in other post-Communist countries, the money earned helps support many a family back home. In Klaipeda, BHHRG was told that some 40,000 people had left the town and its environs for Western Europe. Most students interviewed said they intended to follow once Lithuania was in the EU. Attempts to show that people are returning to the new, booming EU candidate country fail to convince. In a few years time, Lithuania's population will be dominated by the old and poor, as young, educated professionals emigrate to other EU countries.

Poverty: Vilnius is a beautiful, but economically dead city. Hotels were empty during the 2002 Christmas fortnight as even more strikingly were the expensive designer shops lining the central city streets and square where President Bush had spoken a month earlier. The sheer inappropriateness of these shops is thrown into sharp relief by the ramshackle, dirty courtyards that often lie behind their attractive 18th c. stuccoed exteriors. BHHRG's observers saw several people picking scraps out of rubbish tips, including one group rummaging just outside a polling station. Sadly, BHHRG's taxi driver described this scene as "normal."

²⁴ See *Lithuanian Weekly*, 13th December, 2002

²⁵ See Krickus op. cit.

²⁶ See Rokas M. Tracevskis and Tassos Coulaloglou, "Lithuania still suicide capital" in *The Baltic Times*, April 4 – 10, 2002

²⁷ Valentinas Mite, "Brain drain in the Baltics: Returnees find bleak prospects" *The Baltic Times*, December 5-11, 2002

²⁸ "Lithuanian Alert", *The Baltic Times*, July 18-24, 2002

²⁹ See *Lithuanian Weekly*, December 13th, 2002

³⁰ See "Lithuanian labour trafficking exposed", *BBC*, 5th November, 2002, "Guns before butter in the Baltics" www.oscewatch.org, 6/11/02

In central Vilnius, the first people BHHRG encountered on the street in sub-zero temperatures were small children begging. Such children now feature on billboards in the middle of the city advertising the installation of close-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras, obviously intended as a crime control measure. Bizarrely, the billboards show children running riot in the streets, ransacking shops and destroying furniture. It is a sad commentary on the state of post-Soviet society and the concerns of the new, ex-Communist urban elite that small children could be the intended target of CCTV cameras mounted on the outside of buildings. The December-January issue of the *inyourpocket* guidebook for Vilnius features the following commentary:

You are being watched

On October 31, 2002, Lithuanian company FIMA finished the installation of 27 CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras in a number of 'highly strategic' places in Old Town, thus finally bringing Vilnius into line with other European cities in which CCTV has proved to be as good as useless. Going into operation a week or so later on November 7, the cameras, which will cost the city an estimated 6.7Lt million (just under €2 million) over the next 10 years in running costs, were the brainchild of none other than everybody's favourite mayor himself, Arturas Zuokas, assisted by his loyal city council, installed as they always are to prevent crime (read, to move it somewhere else), and all beamed to a secret location (on Mindaugo), the cameras have already begun paying their way, with the apprehension of a number of petty criminals, namely local police officers failing to stop speeding drivers in the area. A further 23 should be in place, bringing the total up to a staggering 50, by April 1, 2003.

Sex Trade: Another consequence of the economic collapse in Lithuania is the growth of the sex trade. Vilnius is full of advertisements for sex clubs offering 'erotic experiences' and taxis are plastered with advertisements for 'erotic entertainment'. Casinos are now legal and proliferating.

And, the omnipresence of the sex trade is not confined to the capital. A "customer review" for the Hotel Klaipeda (the largest in the city) offers the following endorsement " *when I was sitting in the bar of this hotel one guy came up to me and offered me [sic] to go and have some sex with young, fantastic Lithuanian girls. IT WAS FANTASTIC!!! The girl was super sexy. She did everything what I said. And it was quite cheap sex with her costed [sic] only 20 US dollars per hour*".³¹ Klaipeda is also full of advertisements for night clubs. BHHRG's (male) representative who stayed in the same hotel overnight during the election period was approached by a young c. 12-year-old boy who offered to "play with him". Local people express their disgust at the high level of prostitution and human trafficking in the country and their concerns that a high number of young people who emigrate end up working in the sex industry in Western Europe.

BHHRG noticed a large number of young ladies accompanied by their male 'minders' on the flight back to London from Vilnius. That these young women were coming to the UK to work as prostitutes was confirmed by a passport officer at Gatwick airport who said it was a normal occurrence, and that Mr. Blair was to blame for his policy of enlarging the EU, which would permit free entry for citizens from the Baltic countries in 2004 in any case. On 14th January 2003, a gang accused of trafficking young women to the West was arrested in Vilnius.³²

In their desire to parade countries like Lithuania as model candidates for membership of the EU, Western governments sweep facts such as these under the carpet, making them complicit in the violence and crime that go with the international sex trade as well as the inhuman treatment of young, vulnerable women and, even more alarmingly, children.

³¹ Customer Review, Hotel Klaipeda, Klaipeda, Lithuania, www.allrussiahotels.com

³² "Lithuanian police uncover human trafficking ring" *Reuters*, 14th January, 2003

Kaliningrad: Another issue of concern to many Lithuanians was, apparently, a new visa regime to be imposed on travel to and from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad – located between Lithuania and Poland on the Baltic Sea coast – by Russians wishing to cross Lithuanian territory. The Lithuanian government has called upon Moscow to open a second Russian consulate in Kaunas. Even though Kaunas is located less than an hour and a half by road from Vilnius, where a Russian consulate is already located, the opening of a second visa-issuing facility is seen as necessary to satisfy anticipated demand. Previously, lorry drivers and others crossing the Lithuanian-Kaliningrad border on trade or business could fulfil any requirements at the border crossings themselves.. The new visa requirement promises to increase the bureaucratic process and costs.

People in Klaipeda were strongly opposed to the visa regime and told BHHRG that it had influenced the way they had voted in the presidential poll. There is a lively (and cheap, by local standards) market run by Poles and Russians in the city which traders and their customers fear will fade away when the visa regime is fully up and running. Traders said that they were already experiencing problems crossing the border and BHHRG's representative himself experienced enormous difficulties at the Sovietsk border crossing between Lithuania and Russia.

The Presidential Election



Paksas election poster - lighting the flame

The Candidates

The 17 candidates who participated in the first round of voting:

Valdas Adamkus, Vytenis Andriukaitis, Vytautas Bernatonis, Kazys Bobelis, Rimantas Dagys, Eugenijus Gentvilas, Kestutis Glaveckas, Algimantas Matulevicius, Vytautas Matulevicius, Rolandas Paksas, Arturas Paulauskas, Juozas Petraitis, Algirdas Pilvelis, Kaimira Prunskiene, Vytautas Serenas, Vytautas Sustaukas, Julius Veselka

Everyone predicted that the election was an open-and-shut affair which Adamkus would probably win outright in the first round, his popularity buoyed up by successes in negotiating NATO and EU entry. 16 other candidates ran against him in the first round on 22nd December; only his former second round rival from 1997, parliamentary chairman Arturas Paulauskas was tipped to come anywhere near the president, in second place.

As for the others, Kazimira Prunskiene, leader of the break-away left New Democracy Party was mildly threatening. This might have accounted for attempts to have her candidacy removed over allegations of KGB involvement during the Soviet period, something that was old news anyway, though the Supreme Court ruled that an additional slip stating her past as an informer should be added to her biography displayed in every polling station alongside those of the other candidates. This white slip was very visible. But Mrs. Prunskiene was popular with the poorest, most marginalized sections of the community and won the election in Visaginas. Various right-wing candidates, including Kazys Bobelis, simply didn't stand a chance. This left Rolandas Paksis as the only other candidate with strong voter recognition. In the weeks before the election opinion polls put him third, with 8% support.

Valdas Adamkus

Valdas Adamkus fled Lithuania with the retreating German army in 1944 and stayed in Germany until 1949 after which he emigrated to the US. He held a series of jobs before eventually becoming Chairman of "a public organization of the Lithuanian émigrés of liberal orientation" called *Santara-Sviesa* (Accord-Light) in 1967.

A community of exiles had gathered in the US in the early years of the twentieth century to be augmented by the arrival of thousands of their fellow-countrymen who had fled the Soviets. Many among them will have fought with the German army between 1941-1944 before ending up in DP centres in Germany at the end of the war. Scholars have since shown that such people were often recruited into special operations activities against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Should they have refused, their past connections to the *Wehrmacht* or worse the SS, would, no doubt, have been publicized.

It seems that at least some possible war crimes suspects from the Baltic States were protected by the Western intelligence community in return for their services. It also follows that many exiles were forever susceptible to blackmail or other means of pressure because of their (or their parents) wartime past. No doubt, most refugees among the large Baltic diaspora in North America and Canada were blameless, but those who felt they had something to hide will have been all too eager to help out when required.³³

From the early 1970s onward, Adamkus served in the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), rising to become EPA administrator for the Great Lakes Region. During this time he also visited the Soviet Union as a delegate in negotiations over environmental matters. In fact, according to one profile "He was a leading figure in a small, liberal wing of the émigré community in the United States, which advocated some kind of an accommodation with the Soviet Union. His liberal views, as well as his direct contact with Moscow as an EPA liaison, were seen by many Lithuanian émigrés as giving comfort to the Soviet occupiers".³⁴

In June 1997, already in retirement, Adamkus was approached to run in the upcoming Lithuanian presidential election. However, there were problems with his lack of Lithuanian citizenship as well as the residency qualification demanded by the constitution. In fact, he qualified to stand just in time after his candidacy was referred to the Constitutional Court. It seems that the matter was settled as Adamkus and his wife had earlier purchased a holiday home in the country.

³³ Stephen Dorril: *"M16: Fifty Years of Special Operations"*, Fourth Estate, London 2000

³⁴ Michael Tarm, *"Mr. President"*, City Paper, The Baltic States, 1998

The election was close and went into a second round in which Adamkus faced Arturas Paulauskas. He won with a slim .7% (14,256) of votes. Apparently, an electricity failure in Kaunas had led to confusion at the end of polling day. At the time, some conjectured that this had provided a 'convenient' hiccup during the count which might have indicated foul play. Interestingly enough, on 23rd December, 2002, at the Central Election Commission's post-electoral press conference BHHRG learned that there were problems with the electricity supply in Kaunas, yet again, during the night of 22nd December 2002!

During his period in office, the president's *cabinet* employed many Lithuanian Americans and the Commander of the country's armed forces, Brig. General Jonas Kronkaitis, is a Lithuanian American. BHHRG visited the President's campaign office where questions were fielded by a Lithuanian American. Mr. Adamkus seems to have been an amiable figure, but one who never concerned himself much with the real problems facing Lithuanian society. He was also perceived as the defender of foreign, rather than local, interests. For example, he opposed the LSDP-led government's attempts to improve the status of tenants in state properties who were threatened by the terms of the Property Restitution Law which aims to return state property to its former owners (foreign citizens) and could lead to people from the poorer sections of society losing their homes in favour of those who left the country, albeit unwillingly, over 60 years ago.³⁵

The Western media had no doubts about the outcome of the poll. A *Reuters* report from December 5th 2002 entitled "Lithuania's Adamkus set to cruise to re-election" held that Adamkus enjoyed a "large and growing lead" among the 17 candidates competing in the first round, and was expected to win without a run-off.³⁶ CNN's ticker-tape reported that Mr Adamkus was "cruising to victory" well after a second round became inevitable at midnight, 22nd December.

Adamkus's nearest rival, according to an opinion poll cited in the *Reuters* report, was Parliamentary Chairman, Arturas Paulauskas, who had 10.2% support. All Western media outlets presented the President as a shoe-in, due to the (apparent) overwhelming popularity of his pro-NATO, EU policies without a passing reference to any local issues. However, several Lithuanians told BHHRG that Adamkus was widely regarded as a "stranger" or "foreigner" within the republic who could not possibly be a leader because he had no understanding of or intimacy with the problems of ordinary citizens.

The question of the president's age – 76 – was brushed aside. His spokesman, Aidas Palubinskas, eloquently described the amazing verve and vitality of Mr. Adamkus (who underwent major surgery in 2001) claiming "I wish I was as healthy". However, it may not be entirely fanciful to suggest that Adamkus himself was not over-keen on standing again for the presidency, a post he would eventually retire from in his eighties. He did not reveal his intention to run until September, 2002 after a bizarre, Soviet-style intervention when 60 Lithuanian intellectuals handed the president a letter urging him to stand again. During the campaign mass organisations, youth groups, sportsmen, artists and popular entertainers all announced their unanimous support for the President - as their predecessors had for Comrade Brezhnev in the old days.

No doubt, the real pressure came from those in the Western political establishment who wanted to ensure that all the remaining ends of NATO and EU accession were tied up. Although Mr Adamkus is probably dreaming of an all-American retirement in Chicago, he has said that he will remain in Lithuania.

Rolandas Paksas

The 48-year-old Paksas, a former mayor of Vilnius, has also served on two occasions as Lithuania's prime minister resigning from the post twice in protest at the government's policies. He has also drifted between political parties being originally a member of Landsbergis's Homeland Union, before moving to the Liberal Union. BHHRG was told by Mr. Paksas's spokesman that Landsbergis was now a leading actor in trying to prevent Paksas winning the presidency in the second round of voting. In Autumn 2001,

³⁵ See *EECR*, op. cit

³⁶ "Lithuania's Adamkus set to cruise to re-election" *Reuters*, 5/12/02

Paksas broke away from the Liberal Union and founded a new party, the Liberal Democrats, with 10 other defectors in January 2002.

In the Soviet era Paksas had been a member of the USSR's air acrobatic team and he has since performed various notorious stunts, including flying his small single-engine plane under a bridge over the river Neris. After the election and Paksas's surprise victory, much was made of this by local and Western media: articles were peppered with remarks about the new president's former career as a "stunt pilot". The *sous text* was that Mr. Paksas was an unserious person and the Lithuanian public had voted him into office as a *jeu d'esprit*, a bit of fun, as the office has little (formal) power.

News reports, *en passant*, also referred to Paksas's opposition to a 1999 deal by which the country's oil refinery, Mazeikiai, was sold to the US Williams corporation. As part of the deal, the Lithuanian government agreed to co-fund the project to the tune of \$390m. Paksas regarded this as an unacceptable burden for cash-strapped Lithuania and resigned as Prime Minister in November 1999.³⁷ During Paksas's second term as premier in 2001, the opportunity arose for him to resign again, this time over a deal involving the sell-off of Lietuvos Dujos (Lithuanian Gas) to the Russian company YUKos. Paksas opposed the agreement, which even Social Democrat leader Brazauskas described as "detrimental for our state. Although suspicions arose that Paksas's opposition stemmed from his secret backing of another Russian oil company, LUKoil, in the agreement, his resignations set him apart from other politicians in the eyes of much of the public as someone prepared to act out of principle. It is these issues rather than his skills as a stunt pilot that garnered him support in the presidential election. Needless to say, rather than commend him for connecting with ordinary peoples' concerns he has been lambasted both at home and abroad for being a 'populist'.

Although Paksas was presented in the foreign media as the 'outsider' in the presidential race, better-informed people in Lithuania probably knew otherwise. Rumours appeared in the local press. For example, *Kaunas Diena* claimed that Paksas was spending 'vast sums' on his election campaign which were provided by shadowy Russian businessmen.³⁸ As Russia's above-mentioned Yukos company managed to buy-out Williams' majority share in Mazeikiai with the blessing of Mr. Brazauskas's government after the US company had run up enormous debts, it seems that all politicians in Lithuania have such connections.

BHHRG visited Paksas's campaign headquarters in a crumbling, insalubrious building in Vilnius during both rounds of voting. Unlike Mr. Adamkus's somewhat smarter offices further away in the city, the Paksas team did not appear to be awash in cash. However, there were groups of enthusiastic people helping with the campaign. Spokesmen were keen to point out that their candidate supported Lithuania's entry into both NATO and the EU. But, there was some discrepancy over particular issues. Gintanas Surkus, told BHHRG that Mr. Paksas was not opposed to the closure of Ignalina as long as the EU funded the construction of a new plant. However, on a later visit, Regimijus Acas, the Liberal Democrats deputy chief of staff, said that Mr. Paksas did, indeed, oppose the closure of the plant.

In reality, the decision to close Ignalina has been made with funding provided by the EU. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine how Paksas, or anyone else for that matter, could change things. Mr. Acas also told BHHRG that Mr. Paksas would pay more attention to the needs of ordinary citizens and help reduce poverty by, for example, helping to reconstitute losses people incurred during the ruble devaluation of the early nineties.

There was also the question of Mr. Adamkus's age - not an entirely tasteless question. The president is 76 years old and underwent serious surgery in 2001. A fresh victory would mean that he would eventually retire in his eighties. The youth factor, therefore, will also have helped Paksas's chances.

³⁷ Benjamin Smith, "Prime Minister of Lithuania Quits Amid Party Struggle" *The Wall Street Journal*, 21/6/01

³⁸ See "Lithuania: Businesses support presidential candidates, hope for dividend – paper" 14/12/02
www.hoovnews.hoovers.com

The Election

The campaign: There were large posters for some of the candidates in central Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda but no other visible signs of an election. Most of the posters appeared to be for Mr. Paksas. The candidates also had their campaign slots on television. However, the President had the monopoly of TV coverage which devoted a large amount of time to replaying film of his successes on the world stage meeting Bush, in particular, as well as other international leaders. These broadcasts increased during the fortnight before the second round.

But, in the countryside, BHHRG observers learnt that the campaign had been low-key. It seemed that the candidates had not been particularly diligent in seeking grass-roots support – the President had not been to any of the towns visited by BHHRG on 22nd December, although his “representatives” had apparently dropped by. However, local supermarkets had copies of the free Adamkus campaign newspaper, usually prominently displayed. Media reports in the pre-election period portrayed the President’s failure to campaign in a favourable light – he had had been “too busy” with his international commitments to find time for the locals. The assumption was that Mr. Adamkus’s foreign policy successes were sufficient to ensure re-election.

Mr. Adamkus’s spokesman, Aidas Palubinskas, also told BHHRG that candidates had to purchase articles or news items in newspapers in order to get media exposure - the “order number” would be at the bottom of the article. He didn’t seem to find anything wrong with this practice.

The Paksas campaign claimed to have deployed 7,000 domestic observers throughout Lithuania for the second round of voting. In this way, apparently, Paksas’s Liberal Democratic Party made up for the fact that it was not entitled to representation on election commissions. Regimijus Acas complained that the Adamkus campaign had used official state structures to intimidate voters, abuse postal voting, and to order voters – particularly military personnel – to vote for the president. Another complaint from the challenger’s camp was that the Adamkus campaign had committed a flagrant violation of the electoral law by running campaign ads on television in the 30-hour period before polls opened, during which such advertising was expressly prohibited. A complaint was registered with the Central Election Commission on the Saturday before election day. Paksas was also opposed by most of the big political hitters (and parties) in the Seima including Brazauskas, Paulauskas and Landsbergis. However, this might very well have improved his chances with the electorate.

On the other side, Mr. Adamkus’s spokesman claimed that Paksas had been spending large amounts of money from dubious sources on his campaign. It was widely rumoured that Russian business interests were behind his candidacy. In a way, Adamkus had painted himself into a corner by presenting himself as the foreign policy candidate. By the second round, it was too late for him to row back and appeal to the voters on the domestic ticket. By then, Paksas was seen – rightly or wrongly – as the candidate most attuned to the needs of ordinary people.

Local media supported Adamkus as did the foreign press. Hostility towards Paksas was forthcoming both at home and abroad as his victory became apparent: he was immediately accused of the two cardinal sins: being “right-wing” and “populist”. However, if Paksas was a “populist” they themselves must take something of the blame for his victory. By presenting ordinary Lithuanians as totally preoccupied with NATO and EU entry (something far from true) they ignored the reality on the ground..

Polling days: BHHRG observed voting in Nemencine, Svensioneliai and Visaginas on 22nd December. On 5th January they monitored the poll in and around the city of Kaunas. An observer also visited Klaipeda, both before and after the election.

Voting was generally orderly and polling stations properly organised. However, the actual polling rooms in some places were small and cramped. In the second round (which was held in bitterly cold weather)

BHHRG observers felt that the polling stations were inadequately heated. This was in Kaunas municipality where problems with electricity had been reported in the past.

In the first round, there were observers for some of the candidates in some polling stations, but by no means all. However on 5th January the Paksas team had covered the country with their observers as they had promised BHHRG. On 22nd December the largest number of observers encountered was in Visaganas, the dormitory town for Ignalina. However, they were unprepared to talk to BHHRG's observers, claiming that they could neither answer questions in the polling station nor leave it in order to talk outside. There was a strong sense of 'control' which was also noted on 5th January in Kaunas, where someone always hovered around as the observers answered questions. The situation in Visaganas was strange. BHHRG's observers were followed from one polling station to the next and polling station chairmen were suspicious of the Group's accreditation documents.

In fact, the intangible sense of control hovered over the whole proceedings. BHHRG's driver during the first round accompanied the observers into all the polling stations visited – unusual behaviour as most drivers are normally uninterested in the voting process. On the way back to Vilnius, he took a circuitous route that prevented BHHRG catching the end of the poll in the capital city, as planned.

Voters were unwilling to say anything concrete – they would announce that there was no work in their village/town - they "had lost hope of ever getting a job" but would vote for "stability". Were they in favour of entry into the EU ? "Some people are and others aren't" would be the answer. The most candid response was: "people don't really understand what it means". However, BHHRG's representative who visited the port of Klaipeda was told that people were "intimidated" by the "government's overwhelming pro-EU propaganda" and afraid to express opposition to the EU as they feared they "might have serious problems with the secret police".

No one expressed any enthusiasm for the candidates in the first round. Certainly no one said they supported the president – the nearest thing would be the desire for "stability", presumably shorthand for supporting the incumbent. In the second round, voters were more forthcoming and BHHRG did find enthusiasm for Paksas, who had promised to improve the employment and pensions situation in the country.

Whereas voters in other post-communist countries are happy to indulge in a good moan about their situation to outsiders, the average Lithuanian is cautious and unwilling to give anything away. Perhaps this is why Mr. Paksas's success came as such a surprise as many people must have kept their voting intentions very much to themselves. This will also have been helped by the fact that, as one domestic election observer admitted to BHHRG: "there is no political activity here whatsoever". Most of the myriad political parties in the country have no meaningful grassroots representation as it has been, though shocking this may be to say, since the first free elections were held in 1990.

Many people must have thought that by keeping quiet they could vote as they wished. As the apparat was totally confident of an Adamkus victory, much was left to chance. Added to which, there was no international presence to interfere in the outcome. Although the results of most post-communist elections can now be predicted with some accuracy in this case not: for once, *hubris* was punished.

Results: Rolandas Paksas 54% Valdas Adamkus 45%.

Mr. Adamkus won in Vilnius, Kaunas (town and *raion*) and two small towns, Palanga and Birstonas, both holiday destinations popular with the nomenklatura. At one stage, early in the evening, Lithuanian television reported that Paksas had a commanding lead of 66%. However, this went down as more results came in. Television profiles of the, now outgoing, president had obviously been prepared with his re-election victory in mind as, yet again, pictures of him schmoozing with George Bush and various European leaders were replayed. On the night of 22nd December, Lithuanian television channels continued to give the impression that Mr Adamkus was on course for re-election long after the figures suggested that he had polled only about half of the 70% widely predicted in the run-up to polling day.)

Anomalies over postal votes: Apart from alleging that the regime would intimidate voters and that the organs of power would use undue influence in instructing subordinates and government functionaries to vote for the incumbent, the Paksas campaign complained that the postal vote would be abused. In the first round of voting the president received 32,665 postal votes out of his 506,555 overall total, and his share of postal votes ran at twice the rate to ordinary ballots compared with other candidates. It should be pointed out, that Mr. Paksas himself got the second largest number of postal votes in the first round - 16,248 out of 283,257.

In the second round, although unable to verify the allegations, BHHRG did find evidence of postal vote results where Adamkus' share was either wildly out of proportion to the candidate's share of the in-person vote, or else he had won the postal vote very handily while having lost the in-person vote. In the cities of Panevezys, Klaipeda and Siauliai, Rolandas Paksas emerged victorious in the total result but lost the postal vote by significant margins. In fact, even in the precinct where BHHRG observed the count, and where Adamkus won by 71.49% to 28.51%, the postal vote was 20 for Adamkus and only 3 for Paksas – about 90% in favor of Adamkus.

Mr. Adamkus won the postal vote nationwide: 54,019 to 50,519 for Paksas. A total of 7.35% of votes in the second round of the election were postal as well, which appears rather a lot for a form of voting that is meant to be highly exceptional. While such results are not proof of underhandedness, they do tend to raise doubts that postal voting is a necessarily welcome phenomenon in post-Soviet elections.

Lithuania counts postal votes separately, unlike the United Kingdom where all votes are mixed together and where there have been several proven cases of postal vote fraud. Some fear the abuse may be even more widespread but without a separate count, difficult to prove. However, in general, postal voting is a bad idea. In Vilnius, it was suggested that officials could easily lean on people to fill in the postal vote in a certain way in the privacy of their homes.

Reaction: Both local³⁹ and international media were quick to deplore Paksas's election. It was immediately presented as a victory for the 'extreme right'. On 6th January, Radio Free Europe compared Paksas with Zhirinovskiy and Le Pen⁴⁰. *The Times* joined in, with its headline "'Le Pen' of the Baltics takes on Brussels"⁴¹ But, comparisons with the French National Front leader who is hostile to the EU and all its ways are totally spurious. Mr. Paksas has always supported Lithuanian membership of the EU and, even though he stated that his first stop was going to be Brussels to try to improve some of the conditions imposed on Lithuania by the EU, it is doubtful that any serious changes can be made at this date to the accession agreement. Paksas's spokesman told BHHRG that the candidate fully supported NATO entry and there was no mention of seeking to change any of the terms under discussion. He has also been emollient towards Prime Minister Brazauskas and not sought to alter the composition of the government, as previously suggested.

Therefore, in the two areas which will have the most profound impact on Lithuanian society and the country's economy there was no substantial difference between the two candidates. Whether the new president will have any leeway to do anything very much to improve peoples' standard of living is a moot point. Voters obviously thought – even if it was an act of desperation – that they would give him a chance and he has promised to try to improve the situation in the area of jobs, prices and pensions.

However, the Western powers may probably lose some influence as Paksas is likely to choose his team locally – Adamkas relied on many US advisors. As for the EU, the worry for Brussels is that people might now feel emboldened to vote against the country's accession as they have seen that it is possible to reject the wishes of the apparat. Once described as the most enthusiastic candidate, Lithuania is now regarded as problematic. Already, voices in the *Saema* are asking for the rules governing referendums to be changed. Mr. Brazauskas said on 23rd January that the 50% participation threshold necessary for a

³⁹ "Lithuanian newspaper notes rising concern over president-elect's populist plans", *Lietuvos Rytas* 8/1/03, www.bbcmonitoringonline.com

⁴⁰ *RFE/RL*, 6/1/03

⁴¹ See, also "Zhirinovskiy Becomes Lithuanian President", 6/1/03 www.Pravda.ru

referendum to be valid, should be abandoned. It was also suggested that voting should take place over a two day period giving people a chance to fully consider their vote. Or, as cynics point out, a chance for ballot boxes to be interfered with overnight.⁴²

If Lithuania did say no, Estonia and Latvia which vote afterwards could follow suit. It is unlikely to happen, but the presidential poll has shown that the Lithuanian voter is less predictable than previously anticipated and that foreign policy successes in the West are not as popular as imagined. The West and its political and media acolytes should cease to be so complacent lest they find, as they did on 5th January in Lithuania, that the emperor has no clothes.

⁴² RFE/RL, 22/1/03