

ABSTRACT

The project attempts to elaborate and analyze the national question in Lithuania from the re-establishment of independence in order to perceive the potential of the society and the state, namely, to find democratic scenarios for the future development of inter-ethnic relations in this country. Several major areas are examined, i.e. institutional-legal aspects of minority rights, the possibilities of the political and economic integration, and the influence of the external factors on the national minorities in Lithuania.

Compared to other Baltic States, legal status of minorities in Lithuania does not cause much trouble. This is due to liberal citizenship laws of 1989 and 1991, and to the fact that the legislation on national minorities is directly based on international standards. This is reflected in the documents of the Council of Europe. Lithuanian laws do not provide for a definition of the national minority, however they follow the practice adopted in most European states. The Constitution states that a person's race, nationality, language and religion shall not cause any restrictions of the rights of the individual, neither shall they grant any privileges. No statutory violations of minority rights were observed by the Constitutional Court. Deviations from the international standards could be explained by practical (in)capabilities of state agencies to secure necessary funds for supporting ethnic communities. However, legally, minorities enjoy all the cultural, linguistic, religious and other rights known to the European Convention on Human Rights.

In Lithuania each ethnicity has the chance to build its own associations and these organizations have an opportunity for influence in the political system. Characteristics of national minorities demonstrated that Lithuania strongly follow inclusionary strategy. Despite the relatively backwardness of the East Lithuanian districts were national minorities composed the majority, economic reform - privatization, the restructure of economy, the restitution of land - become the factor of multiplication of identity of national minorities. Economic reform enhances inter-ethnic cooperation in Lithuania.

On the other hand, de facto the evidence indicates the low political integration of ethnic minorities into political system of Lithuania. In spite of activity and efforts of Lithuanian Polish Electoral Action, Alliance of Lithuanian Citizens, Lithuanian Russian Union representing the interest of ethnic minorities in politics and political activity of Russians and particularly Poles is lower comparing with Lithuanians. Decreasing representation in the central and local bodies of government, the tendency of growing non-participation of ethnic minorities in the elections and support for non-ethnic political parties, on the one hand, speaks about their alienation, on the other - the possibilities for integration.

It is necessary to notify that the "external factors", which can be called the Russian, the Polish, and the Byelorussian factors, tried to "adjust" the process of the integration of the national minorities of Lithuania. During the eight-year-independence period, the role of these aforementioned factors was not equivalent: three countries - USSR (Russia), Poland and the Belarus SSR - provided their initial appeal to the national question in Lithuania, had tried to sway the territorial and national-civil integrity of Lithuania the period from 1990 to 1992; later on it was only Russia to remain important.

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**NATIONAL QUESTION IN LITHUANIA: ACCULTURATION,
INTEGRATION OR SEPARATENESS?**

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INTRODUCTION

Aims of research and importance of problem. In the opinion of the majority of politicians and analysts, in the post-communist states ethnic relations have become one of the most important and burdensome problems to be resolved. In the process of the political systems' transformation and democratization, the politicization of ethnic relations is characteristic almost to all post-communist states. Oftentimes there appear sound arguments that the principal threats to the overall European security no longer emanate from the military capacity of Russia or the reconstituted Soviet Union. Otherwise, these threats, according to them, emanate from the various ethnic conflicts and territorial counterclaims that predominate in the former Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union¹. In regard to this, Lithuania's situation and the undergoing look as though unique. Lithuania has managed to hinder preclude the emergence of any considerable ethnopolitical conflict. The inter-ethnic tension that woke up and seemed tenable in 1989 retreated soon after August 1991. Thus nowadays, if we compare Lithuania with its closest neighbors, we can affirm that Lithuania does not suffer from national problems of any considerable character.

Thus, the emergence of several questions may seem logical: first, what reasons have stipulated the development of this kind of events; and second, is it for sure that the transformation of geopolitical environment, social contention, which lay behind the economic reforms, and the burdens peculiar to the formation of the democratic political system will not bring about some kind of new ethnic conflicts. In other words, we ought to find out what factors, and how, determine the integration of the non-dominant national communities into the public, political, cultural, and economic life of Lithuania. Thereupon, our attention will be devoted to the analysis of this process.

We suppose that in this research it is useful to employ a distinction between, on the one hand, economic and political integration and the social integration, on the other. In this manner it is usual to identify a number of chief levels and strategies of social integration. First – provided the adoption of *core society* values and traditions, the ethnic community can be fully *assimilated*. Second – the idea of a blend, or *amalgamati*

while contributing its distinctive values to the society, the non-dominant ethnic community is to become merged into the larger society so that the resulting values and customs are a blend. (The “melting pot” politics were based upon this idea.) And finally, the third alternative - while yet being part of the larger society in terms of government, free trade and communications, the outlying national community contrives to retain its cultural distinctiveness. In sense, the latter is characteristic to the strategy of cultural pluralism.

In the light of this, several stages of the economic integration can be discerned as well: from partial and full integration to economic segregation, when both ethnic and cultural servility condition the economic status of the ethnic community. (We may asser that in modern Lithuania there were no political encroachments of the government, which could be aimed at restricting the economic initiative of the outlying ethnic communities. As a matter of fact, the restructuralisation of the economic system - transition from the so-called command-planned system into an open market system – could have brought more bruises to some groups than to the others; nevertheless, this does not pinpoint to the strategy of governmental policies, but is more tightly bound with the character of the formerly-exercised Soviet modernization.)

On its turn, the political integration corroborates four core strategies. The first of these - *political assimilation* - is met in the societies where ethnicity is of no political significance and where government policies having no bearing on the status or relationships of ethnic groups. Second, the situation when ethnic and cultural peculiarities (idiosyncrasies) are considered important and significant, but, provided the *accommodation* policies exercised by the government, there appear attempts aimed at avoiding the discrimination and elimination of the ethnic minority from the political system. The third alternative – *ethnopolitical conflict* - depicts a situation when ethnic groups are at a constant conflict and none of them shows a bent to compromise. The government, on its turn, favors one of the groups patently. And, finally - the last situation - when ethnic minorities are completely excluded from political system and act as an object of state politics.

¹ Larrabee S. F. East European Security After the Cold War War, RAND, National Defence Research Institute. - Santa Monika, 1993. - P. 4.

In the light of the fact that the content of the process of integration of national minorities is not sufficiently and comprehensively analyzed by Lithuanian scientists, in this research the authors have decided to emphasize upon the political aspects of the integration of national minorities. (Herein we should add that, up until now, those scientists who were investigating upon the standing of national minorities, had first of all accentuated the social and economic aspects of their integration into the public life of Lithuania²). On the other hand it is important to go beyond the accentuation of the positive undergoings in the sphere of political integration, and encompass and elucidate the negative aspects of the national politics of the Lithuania State.

Theoretical background. Along with the execution of the project, its authors have first of all employed the “*triadic relational nexus*” theoretical model proposed by Rogers Brubaker. According to him, in the post-communist states the national question and the inter-ethnic relations must be analyzed in response to the reciprocal interaction of three main factors. These three factors are: the national minorities, the newly founded nation-states, where the minorities dwell, and "the external national "homelands", with which the national minorities are identified on the basis of ethnocultural characteristics (origin, language), but whose citizens they have not become³. According to the scientist, dynamics of the relations amidst these elements is the one, which determines the development of the ethnopolitical processes in the post-communist states. Thus the integration of the non-dominant ethnic communities depends not only on the internal factors (the mutual relationship between the ethnic minority and the national state), but on the external factors as well (the politics of the neighboring country regarding its fellow countrymen). According to the Brubaker's statement, the dynamics of the aforementioned three factors influence first of all the manner which helps tackle the problem of citizenship in the new nation-states, and second, what understanding of the nation – *civic*, so characteristic to the West, or *ethnocultural*, where self-identification is based upon common origin, language –

² Grigas R. (ed.). Paribio Lietuva. Sociologinė Paribio gyventojų integravimosi į Lietuvos valstybę apybraiža. - Vilnius, 1996.

³ Brubaker R. Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. - P. 43 - 44, 111 - 112.

predominates in the minds of political elite and society at large. In his words, it is important to know what will the main criteria of the nationhood be, and how principle of nationality and national self-determination, in accordance to which the new national states base their claims to legitimacy, will be reconciled with the practices of democratic citizenship.

Therefore, it should be understood that we treat Brubaker's model as perspective. However, as long as the analysis of the problems regarding the integration of national minorities in the post-communist states appears complex, we would think it necessary to rivet our special attention on some additional items. These important aspects of integration were well elucidated by J. Berr⁴. It seems viable to explicate the following aspects: first, whether there exist institutional pre-requisites concerning the integration of the peripheral (nondominant) ethnic communities (for example, the national laws regulating their rights), and how these institutions function in a specific social environment, and second, in which way, are the mutual relations between, on the one hand, ethnic minority and, on the other hand, majority, swayed by the nature of a historic-cultural (chiefly – the communist) heritage.

Thus the strategy of the research was defined by way of co-ordinating the two viewpoints.

1. ETHNIC RELATIONS IN LITHUANIA UNTIL THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN 1990

1.1 ORIGIN OF MODERN LITHUANIAN NATIONALISM

From the ethnical point of view the traditional state of Lithuania (the Grand Duch of Lithuania - GDL) was very heterogeneous. Ethnic Slavs constituted more than a half of its population. In such a society the basic principals of existence of ethnical communities were autonomism and isolationism and ethnicity did not play an important role in the

⁴ Berry J.W. *Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation*. - Ontario: Sage/Halsted, 1996. - P.3 - 4.

formation of policy. The state practically did not interfere in the sphere of ethnical relations and did not regulate them in any special way (except, for the status of Jews).

In such a society not ethnic but religious and especially social differences were of greater importance. Therefore in this country a political conception of the nation was formed according to which the nationality was determined by general political traditions and institutions and affiliation to privileged class. The formation of the federal state (union with the Kingdom of Poland of 1569) provided impetus for the cultural (especially ethnolinguistic) Polonization of the social and political elite of the country. The self-dependence of the state in the political mentality of the gentry became linked to the idea of the Union that until the middle of the 19th century was successfully combined with the loyalty to the political traditions of GDL.

The state did not pursue any integration policy (from the social-cultural point of view); on the contrary, its task was to preserve the existing social differences. At the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment some intellectuals who, incidentally, were also descendants from the gentry, made efforts in trying to change the attitude of the traditional elite towards the values of folk culture. Unfortunately these integration processes were interrupted by the incorporation of the GDL lands into the Russian Empire.

The genesis of modern Lithuanian nationalism takes its beginning in the processes of modernization of society that became especially rapid in the middle of the 19th century (after the abolition of serfdom) and in the specifics of Russian nationality policy in the lands of GDL. The policy of the Russian authorities was directed towards the gentry, the dominating social stratum of the Lithuanian society. The main aim of this policy was to restrict elite's influence on society. However, the anti-Russian insurrections that took place in the first half of the 19th century showed that Russia's efforts to integrate this class into its political system would not be successful. Therefore, as the result of the policy of repression that was subsequently adopted by the Russian authorities, democratic part of the gentry was eliminated and among the remaining noblemen the tendencies of ethnopolitical Polonization and social conservatism became stronger. The idea of the union without the specifics of self-dependence of GDL began to dominate in the mentality

of the gentry. On the other hand, in the second half of the 19th century the processes of modernization stimulated social differentiation of society and created the basis for the formation of the Lithuanian intelligentsia. This social stratum, due to the policy of denationalization was not able to enter administration structures of the Empire and therefore formed so called *ethnographic* (objectivistic) concept of the nation. According to this concept the belonging to a certain nationality was determined by ethnocultural and, especially by ethnolinguistic values.

The orientation of the Lithuanian national movement towards ethnocultural values was a breaking point in the development of political consciousness. This orientation meant the renunciation of old unionist-federalistic political tradition and was the cause of so called "Polish-Lithuanian conflict". Prior to World War I in the Lithuanian political world two main political trends with different views on the concept of nation and different strategies of political activity emerged. So called *conservatives* (nationalists and Christian Democrats) popularized the aforementioned objectivistic conception and fought for the Lithuanization of the traditional elite, induced Lithuanian - Polish conflict and did not support open confrontation with the czarist authorities. Another part of Lithuanian politics, so called *radicals* (Social Democrats and populists), maintained that the main criteria of nationality was the right to self-determination. They replaced ethnic differentiation with civic integration and therefore thought that Lithuanian - Polish confrontation was dangerous. They also rejected the possibility of making compromises with the tsarist authorities and therefore were more actively persecuted.

During the time of formation of the national state, i.e. about 1917 - 1922, the goals and political orientation of Lithuanians were quite different and sometimes contrary to those of national minorities. Jews linked the destiny of Lithuania to the democratization of the whole Russian Empire. Byelarusians spoke for the Lithuanian-Byelarusian federation which basically meant the restoration of traditional - historical state incorporating the territories inhabited by Byelarusian Catholics. Lithuanian Poles, a small group of so called - Polish speaking Lithuanians - were for the restoration of Lithuanian self-dependence in the union with Poland. Therefore it was quite natural that ethnical Lithuanians played the major role in the process of restoration of the state. (In 1917 German occupationa

authorities permitted the formation of the Lithuanian Council which later became Lithuanian State Council and applied the principle of nation's right to self-determination by declaring Lithuanian independence).

At that time principles of *national democracy* became more and more popular among Lithuanian politics. Petras Klimas, one of the ideologists of modern Lithuanian self-dependence put it this way: "...only Lithuanians and their conscious representatives are interested in creation of Lithuanian state on ethnographical basis. The rights of minorities [national] shall be protected as soon as the formation of Lithuanian state is completed"⁵. In that way Lithuanian political elite without abandoning the idea of cooperation with other national communities indicated specific conditions for intercommunication that national minorities had to accept (national minorities shall support the conception of Lithuanian national state, be politically loyal, etc.). After the adoption of the Interim Constitution of 1918 that guaranteed the equality of all citizens before the law and the inviolability of property Byelorussian and Jewish representatives became members of the Lithuanian State Council. And although Lithuanian elite considered relations between nations in the political system, which was in the process of formation, as unequal, the possibilities for cooperation survived. The Lithuanian Constitution of 1922 and Lithuania's international obligation to protect the national minorities (declaration to the League of Nations) that was undertaken on May 12 the same year was a prove of this. (The principle of protection of national minorities was applied only to newly formed Central - East European national states.) This of course did contribute to understanding between these countries and national minorities living in these countries.

It should be noted that Lithuania and other states of this region formally - legally recognized the existence of different national groups and the right of their members to a special regime, especially in the areas of cultural development and in the use of native language. (This was emphasized in Constitutions of 1922 and 1928 and only in the Constitution of 1938 special chapter regulating the status of national minorities was left

⁵ Eidintas A., Lopata R. (eds.) Lietuvos Valstybės Tarybos protokolai. 1917-1918. - Vilnius, 1991. - P. 38. Later Klimas said: "We <...> do not consult with minorities about how we satisfy their cultural needs". These statements in principal did not reject the possibility of cultural autonomy.

out.) It is important that there was no clear and effective mechanism for the implementation of these rights. Therefore, not surprisingly, efforts to harmonize the relations between different nations were not successful and inspired not the process of integration but that of separation. The dominant nation lacked confidence in national minorities, tried to assimilate them and therefore did not want to establish an organization of national minorities that could contribute to their consolidation.

This policy was a result of prevailing ethnocultural (ethnolinguistic) conception of nation. We could speak about two types of ethnonationalism that were dominating in public life and had an influence on national policy of the state. The first could be called moderate, the second - radical. Both of them maintained that the aim of the national policy should be social (cultural) assimilation of non-dominating national minorities. The only difference was the views on the methods of implementation of this policy. As a rule, in the first case the necessity to be politically loyal and the requirement to refrain from "tendencies incompatible with the interests of national majority" was emphasized. At that same time it was understood that a certain cultural isolation of the national minority was inevitable. In the second case national minorities were considered "alien" and their members were thought of as "foreigners" whose destiny should totally depend on the grace of the "master", i.e. the dominant nation. The main aim was as rapid as possible assimilation of ethnical communities or, if this was impossible, the restriction with the state's help of the influence of national minorities on society as much as possible. (It should be noted that this type of radical ethnonationalism never became a dominant tendency of the state official political leaders.)

As a conclusion, we could say that the domination of the ideology of ethnonationalism and peculiarities of authoritarian political system diminished the possibilities of political integration of national minorities in Lithuania in the interwar period.

1.2. CHANGES IN NATIONAL COMPOSITION: MAIN FACTORS

After World War II and the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union considerable changes in ethnic composition of population took place (about 150,000 people were deported to the remote areas of the Soviet Union and most of them were ethnic Lithuanians)⁶. In the following years the dynamics of composition of population was determined by the peculiarities of socio-economic modernization forced upon by the "center" and the nature of the national policy of assimilation in the Soviet Union the aim of which was to create a "Soviet man".

The model of Soviet modernization was badly suited for the needs of predominantly agrarian society. The establishment of new industrial enterprises stimulated migration from other Soviet republics. (the scope of in-migration in Lithuania was smaller than in neighboring Latvia and Estonia; This was due to general economic backwardness and the domination of agrarian sector in the interwar economy.) From 1958 the increase in population of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic was caused only by such migration. Until 1989 the in-migration balance remained positive, i.e. more people were coming from other regions of the Soviet Union than migrating from Lithuania⁷. Therefore it is not surprising that the number of Russians, Byelarusians and Ukrainians increased⁸. Most of them settled in bigger cities and constituted the bigger part of working class. The absolute majority of Polish population was concentrated in the southeastern and eastern part of the Lithuanian Republic (according to the results of 1989 estimate they made up about 79.6% of the population of Šalčininkai District; 63.5% of Vilnius District; 23.8% of Trakai and Švenčionys Districts; and 10% of several other districts⁹).

⁶ After comparing ethnical composition of population in 1935 (excluding the city of Vilnius and Vilnius District) and in 1959 it is evident that the number of Jews decreased dramatically from 7.15 % to 0.9%. There was an increase in the number of Poles and Russians from 3.04 % and 2.34% to 8.5% and 8.5% correspondingly. The number of Belorussians also increased from 0.21 % to 1.1%. (See Lietuva. Lietuviu enciklopedija. - Vilnius, 1990. - P.57.)

⁷ The average migration - related increase in population: 1959 - 1969 - 4.7 thousand; 1970 - 1978 - 7.3 thousand; and 1979 - 1988 - 10.1 thousand. (See Kuzmickaite L. Migraciniai procesai ir Paribio gyventojø nuostatos isvykti in Grigas R. (eds.) Paribio Lietuva. - Vilnius, 1996. - P.32.)

⁸ In Lithuania in 1970 Russians constituted 8.6%, Belorussians - 1.5% and Ukrainians - 0.8% of population and in 1989 correspondingly 9.4%, 1.7% and 1.2%. The number of Poles decreased from 7.7% to 7.0%. (See, Lithuanian Department of Statistics, Demographic Yearbook 1994. - Vilnius, 1995. - P.16.)

⁹ Vaitiekus S. Lietuvos lenkai. - Vilnius, 1994. - P.6.

Despite many negative influences Lithuanians were always the dominant nationality and constituted the absolute majority of the population. In 1923 they made up 84.2%; in 1935 - 80.6%; in 1959 - 79.3%; and in 1989 - 79.6% of all inhabitants of Lithuania.

1.3 NATIONAL QUESTION AND PERESTROIKA

According to scholars Gorbachev's ideas of political and economic decentralization in Lithuania "fused with ethnic territorial identity to produce explosive "ethnoregional" movements"¹⁰. This was the specific features of perestroika and democratization in three Baltic Republics.

At the beginning of perestroika different, mostly not numerous "nonformal organizations" which were interested in ecological problems and problems of preserving the historical heritage were established. On June 3, 1988, during an open discussion on the future of perestroika in Lithuania and on amendments to the Soviet Constitution (the discussion was initiated by Moscow reformers) a group of intellectuals established the initiative group of Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis (mass reform movement). From the very beginning it was clear that this group would try to become a mass movement and would work within the limits of the Soviet system under the Gorbachev's reform program. At the first official meeting several special commissions, (among them - Ethnic Affairs Commission, that soon presented its "programs of action") were established. The Ethnic Affairs Commission's main aims were the "return of national history to the Lithuanian nation", the recognition of the Lithuanian language as of official language of the republic, the settlement of the ethnic minorities issue and the establishment of national schools outside the borders of the republic. Both the program provisions and the subsequent activity of movement showed that ethnical relations and problems of national minorities were not among the priority spheres. Therefore, even though the movement leaders declared that the movement was democratic, open and spoke of necessity of ethnic peace, they were first of all interested in the affairs of their fellow-countrymen.

¹⁰ Senn A. E. Gorbachev's failure in Lithuania. - New York, 1995. - P. XV.

This course of events was determined by ethnic relations that had developed before the Gorbachev's reforms and different understanding and evaluation of political and social processes taking place in the republic. The latter trend emerged as early as 1988 and became distinctive in 1989. It was influenced by the dominance in the first period of the Sąjūdis activity of cultural problems and of problems of "restoration of historical truth". (i.e. Lithuanians thought that discussions on so called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact were very important, but they were not so important for Russians and Poles. Lithuanians and Poles very often had quite different opinions on many facts of common history. While discussing different topical questions it was more important to defend one's own view than to understand the opponent's arguments.) For Lithuanian intellectuals the idea of perestroika was closely linked to the revival of their own ethnic culture, but ethnic minorities watched these outbursts of national feelings with anxiety or sometimes even considered them dangerous because they were hard to understand or explain. This was because the former Soviet political system had carried out cultural policy that did not stimulate cultural cooperation between ethnic communities. Official rhetoric declared the equality of nations and internationalism and only masked real ethnic problems that became apparent later, under the influence of glasnost policy (The status of the Russian language did not encourage the new-comers' integration into public - cultural life of Lithuania. They considered Lithuanian culture to be unattractive and closed. Besides the official propaganda proclaimed the exceptionality of the Russian nation, therefore Lithuanians considered them to be more privileged members of society. On the other hand Russians thought of the Lithuanian cultural revival as of a threat to their former status.)

Only on the eve of the constituent meeting that took place in October of 1988 Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis paid more attention to the problems of ethnic relations. Different draft programs were published in which the idea of cultural autonomy of national minorities was supported. It was also declared that "...the equality of national rights could be implemented only under condition that the representatives of all nationalities recognize the right of the Lithuanians to self-determination <...> territorial integrity, and become

acquainted and have respect for the Lithuanian history, culture and language"¹¹. Similar provisions appeared in resolutions adopted by the constituent meeting even though problems of national relations and ethnical minorities were not submitted for consideration at the meeting. (It is interesting to note that out of 1021 delegates of the meeting there were 980 Lithuanians (96%), 8 Russians (0.8%), 9 Poles (0.8%), 6 Jews (0.6%) and 13 representatives of other nationalities.) Therefore adopted provisions were of general and declarative nature¹². The ways for the implementation of declared ideas were not specified. On the other hand Sajūdis at that time did not have means for the implementation of its ethnical policy and therefore settled for the declaration of most general provisions.

Relations between ethnic communities became more strained in 1989 when Lithuanian Supreme Soviet issued a decree "On the Use of the Official Language of the Lithuanian SSR". It was declared that the Lithuanian language was the official language and was the main means of communication between the inhabitants of the republic. (Basically, this had been one of the Sajūdis requirements.) This, and the fact that in this document and in the follow-up resolution of the Council of Ministers nothing was said about the guarantees for the languages of the national minorities, caused their dissatisfaction. Although in a broad and extensive project of Provisions of National Policy that was issued in August of 1989 the Sajūdis tried to calm down the situation by saying that the official status of the Lithuanian language should not violate the rights of persons of other nationalities, as early as September of 1989 Šalčininkai and Vilnius District Councils adopted resolutions declaring the aforementioned administrative districts Polish ethnic territorial districts.

This ethnopolitical conflict (which was solved only after the failure of the coup attempt in August of 1991) was caused by several factors. Without engaging in broad comments about the influence of external factors, when the "center" trying to maintain its influence on different regions very often used instigative tactics, we will concentrate on several more important internal causes. First of all, this conflict showed that the Sajūdis, the biggest democratic movement, did not succeed in formulating a program attractive to

¹¹ Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajūdžio bendroji programa. (Projektas) // Atgimimas - October 15, 1988. - No.3.

¹² Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajūdis. Steigiamasis suvaziavimas, Vilnius. - 1990. - P.222 - 223.

the national minorities. Not enough attention was given to general national policy; this policy came on the agenda only when there was a threat of a real ethnical conflict. The Sąjūdis was also not able to support the alternative leaders of ethnic minorities and eventually lost its influence on these leaders. Usually functionaries of the conservative part of the Communist party used the atmosphere of anxiety and mistrust caused by changes in Lithuanian society and became leaders of ethnic minorities. Their policy was usually oriented towards Moscow. The possibility of agreement and compromise was complicated by the fact that both the Lithuanians and the representatives of national minorities had a similar conception of nation which was based on ethnocultural values.

2. MINORITY RIGHTS: LEGAL ASPECTS

2.1. INTERNATIONAL CRITERIA FOR MINORITY RIGHTS AS A BASIS FOR NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The treatment of national minorities has caused some problems in the Baltic States, though the situation in Lithuania differs completely from that in Latvia and Estonia since their Russian-speaking population is much larger. In fact, political interpretations of legal aspects have become increasingly sensitive with respect to the other two Baltic States (especially Latvia), which distinguishes Lithuania as the country where even in the eyes of most ardent critics from the Russian side no big problems in this field exist¹³.

Indeed, when the Baltic States regained their independence, certain difficulties existed in agreeing upon the criteria for becoming a citizen, an issue which could be seen as an essential part of the legal policy regarding minority rights. The main concern, however, was *how the population, as a whole, had to be handled*. In Lithuania, the citizenship issue had been resolved without serious disputes with neighboring countries (see *infra* 2). Here, minority rights concern mainly the issues of maintenance of language, culture and religion.

¹³ Cf. Russian Foreign Minister's Ye. Primakov's statement during his visit to Vilnius on 13 June 1998 (L. Dapkus. *Vien NATO paminejimas J. Primakova veike neigiamai: Rusijos uzsienio reikalų ministras*

The restoration of independence was based on the norms of the international law and the *de jure* continuity of the annexed states. Significant efforts were put to stress this point in all the documents. Thus, the creation of the Council of the Baltic States in 1990 was announced as the continuation of the Baltic co-operation of the interwar period. It was reiterated that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were the same states which were annexed by the USSR in 1940 and which now, together with their statehood, were restoring their international relations and continuing to perform obligations of the members of the League of Nations¹⁴. On 8 November 1991 the Baltic Assembly was created in Tallinn. But even before that, a very important principle for the development of the legal systems of the Baltic States was established on 30 June 1990, in the Council of the Baltic States Declaration on the Independence — *the principle of continuity of their constitutional traditions*: “The Baltic States suppose that according to the importance and essential meaning of the Constitutions, valid in those countries till June 1940, the entire and de facto terms and periods of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independence should be discussed without any delay in the negotiations of all the parties concerned”. Although the principle of continuity of constitutional traditions was mentioned here in the context of international relations, it also had immense importance for the creation of national legal systems in each of these countries, and for their legal co-operation, as well. The establishment of the principle of the continuity of the constitutions was supposed to mean the establishment of democratic societies and the creation of the mechanism of the protection of, and respect for human rights in the Baltic States. This was included into several documents of the relevant institutions. E. g., the Council of the Baltic States on 19 October 1990 declared that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had no other goals but to develop in these countries free democratic societies based on the principles of international law and mutual co-operation with all the countries. In the Declaration of June 6, 1990, it was emphasized that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Final Act of the CSCE member-states meeting in Vienna and other relevant international instruments were

Lietuvos noro stoti i ES nelaiko blogu zenklu Maskvai // Lietuvos rytas. June 15, 1998).

¹⁴ Cf. Communiqué of the Chairman of the Supreme Councils of the Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (May 1990).

taken as a base for the establishment of the rights of the inhabitants of the Baltic States, as well as for universal legal regulation.

Regarding the national minorities' issue, the common position of all the three Baltic States stating the principle of equality for all the people was declared. On 1 December 1990 the Resolution on the Equality of National Minorities was adopted. In this Resolution, the strong will to guarantee the rights of inhabitants of the Baltic States irrespective of their nationality, language, political or religious beliefs was expressed. It was emphasized that the national laws and other legal acts had to be in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments on human and minority rights.

In the last decades, the international community has made several attempts to define the concept of minority. However, it seems almost impossible to agree upon one common definition¹⁵. One of the most recent attempts has been worked out by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), set up by the Council of Europe. In its rejected proposal for the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities, the term *minority* means a group of citizens, smaller in number than the rest of the population of a state, having ethnic, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population, and guided by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion or language¹⁶. The same criteria (language, religion, culture and ethnicity) are reflected in Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, though this Convention does not even contain a definition¹⁷. Lithuania has signed the Framework Convention on 2 February 1995. In the further discussion, the aforesaid elements will serve as a point of departure. In the Lithuanian case, it is appropriate, since minority issues concern mainly the preservation of the identity of the minorities as expressed by language and/or religion. This view is also

¹⁵ Wright J. *The OSCE and Protection of Minority Rights* // Human Rights Quarterly. — 1996. — Vol. 18. — P. 191-196.

¹⁶ Council of Europe/European Commission for Democracy through Law. *Science and Technique of Democracy*. — No. 9. — The Protection of Minorities. — Strasbourg. — 1994. — P. 12-23.

¹⁷ *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (with the Explanatory Memorandum and an Introduction by H.

reflected in the Lithuanian Law on National Minorities which does not include a definition of the term *minority* but which obviously contains the same criteria as the group's aim is to protect and promote the language, religion, culture and traditions. Of course, the criteria of citizenship is met.

The Council of Europe has not included a particular protection clause for minorities in the European Convention on Human Rights. Instead there is a general principle of non-discrimination "on any grounds such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status" (Art.14).

At the Helsinki Summit in 1992, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe decided to appoint the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), who would act to prevent conflicts involving national minorities at the earliest possible stage. Interestingly enough, the term *national minorities* is not defined in the OSCE documentation¹⁸. HCNM has made a number of recommendations to the governments in the Baltic countries including that "of the creation of an Ombudsman's office in Lithuania"¹⁹.

In Art. 73 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania it was foreseen that the institution of the Ombudsman should be established. The constitutional provision was realized by the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Seimas Ombudsman in 1994. Art 28 of said law stipulates that "[e]ach year, the Ombudsman shall submit a written report on his general activities during the previous calendar year to the Seimas by 15 March; the report must be made public and considered in the Seimas. The report shall also contain generalized information stating in which of the institutions specified in Par. 2 of Art. 1 of this Law the greatest number of violations committed by the officials has been established, which statutory laws or other legal acts encourage abuse of official position, and wha

Klebes) // Human Rights Law Journal. – 1995. – Vol. 16. – No. 2-3. – P. 92-115.

¹⁸ The Helsinki Summit Declaration and the decisions are published in "Human Rights Law Journal" (1992, Vol. 13, No. 7-8, pp. 284-306).

¹⁹ Recommendations by the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoep, upon his visits to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania // Human Rights Law Journal. – 1993. – Vol. 14. – No. 5-6. – P. 216-224.

measures should be applied so that the abuse of official position by officials would be diminished”. At the same time, information concerning the activities of the Ombudsman's Office presented by the parliamentary Committee on Human and Citizen's Rights and Nationalities Affairs as well as proposals how to improve said activities shall be submitted and considered in the Seimas.

In the Recommendation 1339 (1997) *On the Obligations and Commitments of Lithuania as a Member State* the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe welcomed the “progress which has been made by Lithuania to consolidate the rule of law, to promote respect for human rights, to bring both law and policy into line with the principles of the Council of Europe”. The Assembly stated, in particular, that “the right to use national minority languages is legally secured, in accordance with the principles of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” and that “other minority issues and relations with religious communities are approached in a spirit of mutual accommodation”.

2.2. CITIZENSHIP IN LITHUANIA AND MINORITY RIGHTS

While a minority can demand certain rights and guarantees as a group, e. g. linguistic rights, a citizen can take part in the governing of the state through the individual political rights (political rights in a narrow sense, i.e. the right to vote and to be elected, the right to form political parties etc.). This is a prerequisite for democracy. The controversial issue, though, is to agree upon the criteria for acquiring citizenship and, thus, who should belong to “the people” that will “govern the state”. Have minorities to be included in “the people” automatically?

Compared to other Baltic States, in Lithuania, the citizenship issue was solved in a very neat and easy way. The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR adopted a Law on citizenship already on 3 November 1989, i.e. before the restoration of independence. According to this Law the citizens of interwar Lithuania as well as their descendants constituted the body of citizens (Art.1). Furthermore, the so called *zero-option* was introduced in order to decide the legal status of the permanent residents in the country.

With this solution, permanent residents of non-Lithuanian origin (with the exception of personnel in the USSR armed forces and security service) were free to acquire citizenship within a period of two years. Ethnic origin, language or religion did not matter, nor were there any formal requirements other than a permanent place of employment or another constant legal source of support. It is estimated that, about 90% of the permanent residents opted for citizenship during this time Council of Europe²⁰. This Law was replaced by another one in 1991 as the two-year period expired²¹. The persons who obtained citizenship according to the “first” Law are included in the body of citizens on equal as defined in the new Law; they are citizens on equal basis and entitled to all the rights that follow from the citizenship. Thus, the former USSR citizens in Lithuania had the possibility to be included in “the people”.

It is noteworthy that, throughout the whole period of national liberation (1988—1990) the task to define who were entitled to the Lithuanian citizenship preceded the adoption of the permanent Constitution (1992). In Lithuania, the logical explanation of this sequence was that only citizens can decide the fate of the state. On the other hand, acquiring Lithuanian citizenship was the prerequisite for taking part in privatization of state property — the process, from which were excluded only Soviet military servicemen temporarily stationed in Lithuania and considered occupation army

As a consequence of not choosing *zero-option*, two other Baltic States, Estonia and Latvia, with their huge number of non-citizens had to work out special solutions in the legislation regarding aliens, i.e. former USSR citizens residing in these countries. These people were not included in “the people”, and citizenship issue became a minority problem giving rise to political interpretations and external pressure.

2.3. THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

²⁰ Doc. 6787. *Report on the application of the Republic of Lithuania for membership of the Council of Europe.* – 2 March 1993. – P. 11.

²¹ Law on Citizenship, 5 December 1991, as amended by 3 October 1995.

In 1989, i.e. even prior to restoration of independence, there was adopted the Law on National Minorities (see *infra* 5.1), and the Government has established a special agency — the Department of Nationalities. Later the Law was significantly amended (29 January 1991), and the Department of Nationalities was transformed into the Department of Regional Problems and National Minorities (May 1994). However, at that time, these were *the first* pieces of legislation and *the first* agency of this kind not only in the USSR, but throughout the whole Central and Eastern Europe. The Department was initially headed by the representative of the Karaite nationality, and throughout the whole period either its Head or his (her) deputy were representatives of national minorities.

Apart of the said Department, governmental institutions mostly involved in minority issues are Ministries of Culture and Education and Science. However, most work is performed by municipalities through allocation of funds for the needs of national minorities. There is no special program on integration of national minorities into governmental institutions; however, at least on the municipal level, the problem is usually solved in the most natural way — if a certain minority composes significant part of the population, its representatives are elected to the local council and even occupy key positions. National minorities are also represented in parliament, however usually within party lists of various parties.

2.4. THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.4. 1. Constitutional Guarantees for Protection of National Minorities

Like in most European countries, Lithuania's Constitution does not contain many provisions regarding directly national minorities. The ones that are in place are of mostly general, however imperative character.

Constitution (Art. 10) provides that the territory of Lithuania shall be integral and shall not be divided into any state derivatives. Thus, territorial autonomy is constitutionally excluded.

The Constitution, which shall be an integral, directly applicable statute (Art. 6), states that all people shall be equal before the Law, the Court and other State institutions

and officers. Furthermore, a person's sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, conviction or opinions shall not cause any restrictions of the rights of the individual, neither shall they grant any privileges (Art. 29).

Art. 37 regards the specific right of the minorities. It states that citizens who belong to ethnic communities shall have the right to foster their language, culture and customs. Thus, the point of departure for the protection of minorities is the notion of *ethnicity* which according to the Constitution comprises language, culture and customs. Lithuanian citizenship is required. The Constitution also foresees that the State shall support the ethnic communities of citizens which themselves shall administer the affairs of their culture, education, organization, charity and mutual assistance independently (Art. 45).

In fact, deviations from these requirements could be explained by practical (in)capabilities of state agencies to secure necessary funds for supporting ethnic communities.

2.4.2. Constitutional Jurisprudence on Minority Issues

In order to ensure the supremacy of the Constitution, the establishment of the Constitutional Court was foreseen in the 1992 Constitution (Chapter VIII). The Constitutional court started its activities in 1993. Through constitutional review of laws and other legal acts, the Constitutional Court examines whether they are in conformity with the Constitution. Unlawful legal acts are thus declared null and void and they are not applicable after the publishing of the decision of the Constitutional Court.

The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania has not yet had any cases regarding infringement of the rights of national minorities. Nevertheless, investigating some other cases, the Constitutional Court had indirectly dealt with questions of citizenship and non-discrimination *inter alia* on the grounds of religion or nationality comprising essential features of national minorities and therefore relevant to the issue of minority rights.

The Case No. 22/94 *On the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (24 January 1995) was initiated by the President of the Republic of Lithuania. It was specified in the inquiry of the President of the Republic that Part 2, Art. 9 of the Convention provided for the possibility to restrict a person's "freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs", whereas Part 4, Art. 26 of the Constitution declared that "a person's freedom to profess and propagate his or her religion or faith" might be subject to limitations. In the inquiry it was stated that, in the Convention as well as the Constitution, freedom to profess and propagate one's religion or beliefs was discerned into two independent freedoms, therefore it could be maintained that the Convention did not prescribe any possibility to restrict a person's freedom to profess his or her religion or beliefs. The Constitutional Court stated that neither Art. 9 nor any other article of the Convention contained two independent freedoms, i. e. a person's freedom to profess religion or beliefs and freedom to manifest religion or beliefs. The freedom to profess religion or beliefs was simply not mentioned in the Convention. In Part 1, Art. 9 of the Convention it was determined: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance". Thereby this text of the Convention differs not only from Art. 26 of the Constitution but also from the texts of the Part 1, Art. 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights containing the word "to have". Consequently, international legal acts and the Constitution while securing to everyone freedom of religion, employ different terms to define this freedom. Taking this into consideration, the Constitutional Court holds that there is absolutely no basis for maintaining that Art. 26 of the Constitution provides for the possibility to restrict freedom to profess religion or beliefs, as the Constitution established a general principles that "[f]reedom of thought, conscience, and religion shall not be restricted" and that "[e]very person shall have the right to freely choose any religion or faith and, either individually or with others, in public or in private, to manifest his or her religion or faith in worship, observance, practice or teaching". The profession of religion or beliefs, when taken apart from manifestation and propagation, is a spiritual category implying the possession of

religious and faith beliefs; it is not accidental that Lithuanian words "laisvė profesijai" (freedom to profess) in the French and English texts of the first part of Art. 18 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights correspond to "la liberté d'avoir" and "freedom to have", respectively, however more fully entirely reflect the spiritual nature of religion or faith and the inner state of human soul which may not be restricted in any way if only by persecuting a person for his religion or faith, and even in such a case the persecution cannot deprive him of his religious beliefs or faith. As the law does not require impossible things (*lex non cogit ad impossibilia*), the Constitutional Court holds that this constitutional provision did not have any negative legal consequences in the legal system of the Republic of Lithuania with respect to freedom of faith or religion, and that there is no law restricting the right to profess religion or faith.

Another inquiry of the President of the Republic in the same case related to the affirmative action (positive discrimination) issue. As the Convention prohibited only negative discrimination, whereas the Constitution forbade both "negative" as well as "positive" discrimination (granting of privileges), the issue was to establish whether the Constitution deviated from the Convention in prohibiting positive discrimination. Furthermore, in the inquiry it was stated that the Convention established a longer list of the grounds for prohibiting discrimination whereas the Constitution no mention was made of the color of the skin and belonging to a national minority. It is worthwhile mentioning that Lithuanian law does not directly provide for affirmative action, however the Constitutional Court interpreted that it did not prevent from positive discrimination at all, as positive discrimination was not considered as granting of privileges: the Constitution establishes certain universally recognized special rights peculiar for a certain groups of people — members of national minorities (Arts. 37 and 45), children, families and working mothers (Art. 39) etc. which is in line with the practice of application of the Convention by the European Court of Human Rights²². All this, along with the general non-discrimination rule, ensure the underlying principle of all people's equality. As to the issue that the Constitution did not mention the color of skin and belonging to a national minority as grounds for prohibiting discrimination, the Constitutional Court interpreted

²² Cf. *Lithgow a. o.*, 8 July 1986.

that the words “race” and “nationality” contained in Part 2, Art. 29 of the Constitution embraced them, therefore Lithuania’s constitutional legislation was essentially identical to the standards of the Convention.

The matters of citizenship were dealt with in the Case No. 7/94 *On the Constitutionality of the Resolution of the Seimas on the Citizenship Matters* (13 April 1994). The Constitutional Court held that Seimas resolution of 22 December 1993 was in compliance with the Constitution. The said resolution established the norm that persons who served in the armed forces of the Soviet Union and terminated their service within the period up to 1 March 1992, having been issued certificates of Lithuanian citizenship, have acquired citizenship of Lithuania. However, the Constitution (Art. 12.) specifies that citizenship shall be acquired by birth or on other grounds established by law (not parliamentary resolution). Neither the Law on Citizenship of 1989, nor the Law on Citizenship of 1991 have foreseen this option, as service in the Soviet Army *per se* was not considered permanent residence in Lithuania which was the prerequisite for acquiring citizenship. Servicemen could not freely choose place of their residence themselves as they were periodically stationed under the orders of high military authority. Even prior to the restoration of independence this was recognised by the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania which by its resolution (15 January 1990) has established that only those USSR Army servicemen who under the Law on Citizenship may be citizens of Lithuania (Art. 1) shall participate in national elections. The Constitutional Court refused to admit the explanation that evaluation of occupation army can be different with regard to time. However, the Constitutional Court made reservations as to explanations that laws of Lithuania allowed servicemen of the Soviet Union to be citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and that the latter were permitted to stay in said services until 1 March 1992, since persons could find themselves in occupation army for different reasons, however, the citizenship of Lithuania they acquired was lawful because they were either descendants of former citizens of Lithuania or they themselves were born in Lithuania. The Constitutional Court decided that the said Seimas resolution attempted to make legal documents confirming citizenship of Lithuania which have been unlawfully obtained by some servicemen.

In arguing the case, the Constitutional Court uses to take into assistance international treaties, references to state practice in other European states, it refers even to relevant directives of the European Communities. This all is meant to support the argument of the court. Therefore, international law has a high status in the domestic legal system, especially with respect to human rights and minority issues. So far, Lithuanian constitutional jurisprudence has not brought any evidences of minority rights violations.

2.5. STATUTORY LEGISLATION ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

2.5.1. Law on National Minorities

As in most countries and in the European practice (see *supra* 1), Lithuanian legislation *does not provide for a definition* of a national minority. Analysis of certain legislative texts allows to draw conclusions that key pre-conditions of granting certain group rights are the number of population and their compact residence²³. The Treaty between Lithuania and Poland of 1994 defines Polish minority by the criteria of Lithuanian citizenship and their self-determination to consider Polish as their native language, and reference to Polish ethnicity, culture and traditions. However, this is not a uniform approach towards all the minorities. Attempts are made to formulate the definition in drafting the new Law on Ethnic Communities (in preparation).

A special law on minority rights — Law on National Minorities — was adopted in 1989²⁴. By the principle of national equality, every nationality and its language shall be respected and equal rights and freedoms to all the citizens in the political, economic and social fields shall be guaranteed. In the Law, the term *national minority* means ethnicity which comprises both language, religion and nationality. Thus, many different groups are covered without a more precise definition. A general prohibition clause of discrimination with regard to race, language or other aspects related to a nationality is followed by an enumeration of the substantial rights of the minorities. The first consists of the right to

²³ Cf. Law on Education of 1991.

²⁴ Law on National Minorities (23 November 1989, as amended by 29 January 1991).

equal protection from the state every citizen of Lithuania, regardless of nationality. The wording of the Law rather indicates a number of commitments by the state in order to guarantee the rights of the minorities. They include the right to support from the state for the development of culture and education, the right to education in their native language, the right to information and press in their native language as well as to use the native language in performing religious or folk rites. The rights to form ethnic cultural organizations, to establish contacts with fellow-countrymen residing outside Lithuania, to be represented in governmental bodies at any levels on the basis of universal, equal and direct election and to hold any post in state or governmental bodies, enterprises, institutions or organizations are also guaranteed.

The state provides maintenance for and supports culture of national minorities *within its capabilities*. This is reflected in the following facts:

- * both Lithuanian and non-Lithuanian citizens have equal rights to use the state cultural institutions and the possibilities therefrom and services provided by them;

- * in the multiethnic regions, as in the rest of Lithuania, culture is funded not only from the state but also from local government budgets. Naturally, in the latter case the bulk of resources is allocated to foster culture of local national minorities;

- * through the Ministry of Culture and other institutions, the state provides from its budget maintenance for cultural and educational institutions of national minorities (e.g. Lithuanian Russian Drama Theater, Russian, Jewish and other museums, etc.);

- * every year (since 1991), through the budget of the Department of Regional Problems and National Minorities, the state allocates additional resources in a separate budget item to support cultural non-governmental organizations of national minorities and their programs;

- * for the implementation of their programs, cultural, educational and press organizations and institutions of national minorities have the access to the Non-Governmental Organizations Foundation administered by the Ministry of Culture, as well as the Independent Press Foundation;

* the legislation, bilateral and multilateral agreements of Lithuania guarantee an unrestricted funding of national minority educational and cultural programmes by historic native lands of national minorities or by international organizations.

Other parts of the law regard some more specific linguistic rights, preservation of historical and cultural monuments of ethnic minorities as part of the cultural heritage of the country, and the establishment of educational and cultural organizations. There is a number of cultural societies of minorities, many of which were founded in the interwar period and some of which were set up in the very beginning of nineties just after the restoration of the independent Lithuanian State.

Rights of individuals belonging to national, linguistic and religious minorities are also defined in other laws as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements concluded and ratified by the Republic of Lithuania.

2.5.2. Political Representation

The right to political representation is seen as an individual personal right not relating to ethnicity. Members of national minorities can make use of the right in two ways: (1) through their political organizations; (2) through participation in political parties. Most choose the second way

In the 1992 parliamentary elections organizations of national minorities were granted lower representation quotas which were abolished before the 1996 elections. The latter proved that the exclusive-national political parties do not receive significant support even within their ethnic communities: the Lithuanian Polish Electoral Action received only 2.98%, the Lithuanian Alliance of National Minorities — 2.44%, and the Lithuanian Russian Union — 1.63% of votes, which is markedly lower than the proportion of Polish or Russian minorities in the whole population.

2.5.3. Religion

Religious communities enjoy particular protection. As to the freedom of religion, the Constitution states that there shall be no state religion (Art. 43). The status and the rights of religious communities are specified in the Law on Religious Communities and Associations²⁵.

Traditional in Lithuania and other churches and religious organizations shall be recognized as long they have a basis in society and their teaching and rituals do not contradict morality and the law. By law, nine confessions are recognized as traditional religions, several of them relating to mostly one national minority (e.g. Muslim — Tartars, Orthodox — Russian, Judaism — Jewish etc.). Religious communities shall furthermore have the right to engage in publishing and to establish public information media. The churches and other religious organizations have the rights of legal persons and the right to own land²⁶.

2.5.4. Language

Lithuanian was reintroduced as the official language in 1989²⁷. The new Law on State Language was adopted in 1995²⁸. Said Law regulates the use of the *official* language in public life of Lithuania, the protection and control of the official language, and the responsibility for violations of the Law on the State Language. The Law does not apply for informal communication and does not impose the language of events of religious communities as well as persons, belonging to ethnic communities. The right of persons belonging to ethnic communities to foster their language, culture and customs is enshrined in other legal acts adopted by the Seimas of Republic of Lithuania.

The adoption of a special law on minority languages several times has been discussed, but so far the aforesaid Law on National Minorities covers this field. In order to guarantee the rights of minorities, the state shall support the development of their culture

²⁵ Law on Religious Communities and Associations (4 October 1995).

²⁶ Law on Supplementing Art. 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (20 June 1996).

²⁷ Decree on the Use of the State Language of the Lithuanian SSR (25 January 1989).

²⁸ Law on the State Language (31 January 1995).

and education, among others the right to be educated in their native language. Fundamental right is that persons who do not know Lithuanian shall be provided with services of an interpreter, free of charge, in legal proceedings. Other languages than Lithuanian may be used in public administration in particular parts of the country inhabited by a substantial minority group. In those areas information signs can be both in Lithuanian and in the language of the minority²⁹. After the adoption of the Law on the State Language and under the Law on National Minorities, the Government has been facing the competing legal norms. The Law on the State Language represents norms of general law while the Law on National Minorities embodies the elements of a special law. Art. 1 of the Law on the State Language recognizes the application of the norms of the special law. This was confirmed by the decisions and decrees adopted by the State Lithuanian Language Commission under the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania later on, as well as by the commentaries of the heads of the Commission of a legally binding character. The state language is obligatory in the seals, stamps, letterheads, plaques, signs in office premises and other signs of Lithuanian enterprises, institutions and organizations. The names of organizations of national minorities, their informational signs may be rendered in other languages along with the state language.

Implementing the Law on the State Language, the Minister of Education and Science issued the Decree *On the Enforcement of the Law on the State Language in the Educational Establishments of National Minorities* (9 April 1996). The official documents shall be written in the state language whereas the internal record keeping in schools (applications of pupils and their parents, letters of attorney, and school press) may be in the language of the national minority. The titles of subjects and topics in the class registers shall be written in the teaching language of the subject (e.g. *Lietuvių kalba, Język polski, English*).

The Law on Education grants the national minorities the right to educate in their native language. This principle is also included in Lithuania's treaties with Poland, Belarus

²⁹ Law on National Minorities, Arts. 4 and 5; Law on the State Language, Art.18.

and the Ukraine. In 1994, the Government adopted the special resolution providing for state support in preparation of teachers for minority schools. As to the universities, they are autonomous and, therefore, may freely select the language of education. In most cases it is Lithuanian, however certain subjects may be taught in other languages, but this issue relates more to visiting lecturers to minority rights.

As it was mentioned before, the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Lithuania are protected by national legislation, bilateral and multilateral agreements. The fact that the right to use national minority languages virtually corresponds with the provisions of the European Charter for the Protection of Regional and Minority Language, was pointed out at the seminar of the Council of Europe held in Vilnius, 1993. It was pointed out also in the aforementioned Recommendation 1339 (1997) *On the Obligations and Commitments of Lithuania as a Member State* of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

3. THE SITUATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES: INTEGRATION POSSIBILITIES

3.1 POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF LITHUANIAN NATIONALITIES

One of the salient indicators of the real situation of ethnic minorities in Lithuania is their integration in the political system. Integration, in its wider sense, describes a condition in which different ethnic groups are able to maintain group boundaries and uniqueness, while participating equally in the essential processes of production, distribution and government

Political integration explains a nature of interrelations of ethnic groups in the broader political system, i.e. relations among ethnic groups as political actors and their competition concerning value allocation in society. Ideally, integration means unconflictual relations among social actors - individuals, organizations and institutions. However, it is not simply coexistence. It comprises active participation and consensus on distribution of power, benefits, rights, values and services of all ethnic groups irrespective of their nationality. Thus the main indicator of political integration of ethnic minorities, beyond the

state policy, is their organizational capacities, i.e. self-organization, participation in politics and political representation.

The main hypothesis of this chapter is that behavior of Lithuanian ethnic minorities are gradually shifting toward more integrative performance in political, social-economic, and cultural areas, although with a different speed and degree among different minorities. The important factors for different level of political integration are historical past, legacy of the Soviet empire, social-economic and cultural conditions.

The level of political integration is measured by operation of political parties and organizations and their participation in the national and local elections: party membership, representation in the central and local government, political initiatives and support among different nationalities for that organizations.

The evidence is improved by data of official statistics and survey's. Official data constitutes affiliation of ethnic groups in political and societal organizations, degree of their political activity, representation in central and local government.

Surveys' data encourage the measurement of degree of political activity, voting behavior, political orientations, degree of alienation and political efficacy as well as party attachment.

Political integration of ethnic minorities closely relates to their ethnic identity - collective and/or individual. Surveys' data indicates the highest collective (national and ethnic) identity of Polish minority comparing with Russians, or/and Lithuanians (Table 1).

Table 1. Tendency for collective identity according to the nationality of respondents (in per cent)

Nationality	None	Weak	Medium	Strong	Very strong
Lithuanians	6	26	39	20	8
Russians	7	27	41	19	6
Poles	4	22	39	21	14
Byelorussians	6	30	32	28	4
Other nationalit	6	30	32	28	4

Source: Irena Juozeliūnienė. Individual and Collective Identity in Changes of Identity of Modern Lithuania. Social Studies. Ed. by M. Taljunaite. Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996.- P. 200.

The collective identity or identifying oneself with a certain community (national or ethnic, i.e. “we”) is defined by two compound factors:

1. Orientation towards common interests and readiness to share values .
2. Moral attitude towards the way of interacting groups.

It was found, that Poles are the ones most strongly oriented towards common norms: 35 % of Poles have strong and very strong tendency, while there are 26 % weakly oriented Poles.

Lithuanians and the representatives of the small nationalities are less than Poles oriented towards the collective norms: 32% of Lithuanians and 36 % of “small nationalities”. The orientation of Russians and Byelorussians is even weaker: 25 % and 29 % of strong tendency (respectively).

Thus, from point of view of strength, the hierarchy of the general tendency for collective identity (national and ethnic) can be presented as follows: (1) Poles,; (2) Lithuanians and small nationalities; (3) Russians, Byelorussians.³⁰

However, the representatives of the same nationality may have contradicting evaluations of perspectives of sociability and individulizations. The most contradictory opinions are characteristic to Lithuanians. Thus, comparing the data concerning the sense of identity to the ethnic group one may expect stronger ties within the Polish minority and weaker among representatives of the rest nationalities of Lithuania.

3.1.1 Political Self-organization

The great impulse towards emerging of political movements and organizations representing interest of ethnic minorities was made by the turbulence of Lithuania, encouraged by the course o *perestroika*, in the three years prior to the founding elections in February , 1990

³⁰ Irena Juozeliūnienė. Individual and Collective Identity *in* Taljūnaite M. (ed.). Changes of Indentity of Modern Lithuania. Social Studies. - Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996. - P. 200.

The shift of the Revival movement of Sąjūdis, established in the Spring of 1988 towards more radical program of Lithuania's liberation resulted in the mobilization of the greater part of the Lithuanian-speaking population and some ethnic minorities, and in the deprivation of certain Russian and Polish groups. Although Sąjūdis did not distance itself from ethnic minorities, it did not win positive response among them. The independent LCP received a response from the greater part of more moderate Lithuanians and partly from ethnic minorities for its step-by-step course toward independence. For example, the news that Lithuanian was granted the status of the state language in November 1989 was unfavorably received by a large part of the Russian community. Quite a number of those who immigrated to Lithuania after June 1940 met this with real hostility. The blame for such negative attitudes among the Russian ethnic minority partly rested with the stand of certain radical nationalist political forces, such as the LFL (Lithuanian Freedom League) and the NU'YL' (National Union of Young Lithuania), which publicly announced that the entire Russian nation, including the Russian ethnic minority in Lithuania, should be held responsible for the historical injustice inflicted by the Soviet Union on the Lithuanians.

The strong organizational and ideological alternative to the Sąjūdis and the independent LCP (Lithuanian Communist Party) became the orthodox communists of the LCP based on the Platform of the CPSU emerged after the split of LCP in December, 1989. Its membership numbered 30,000. The LCP (CPSU) took up an active stand against the restoration of Lithuanian statehood. That program was supported by the intermovement Jedinstvo -Vienybė -Jednosc established in 1988. The Jedinstvo movement sought to mobilize representatives of all ethnic minorities in Lithuania. However, at Constituent Congress of Jedinstvo movement on 13th-14th of May because of extremist position gained by radical group headed by Valery Ivanov a large part of delegates left the Congress. They disapproved the position of Valery Ivanov and claimed its danger for democracy.

The rally of February, 1989 held by the Jedinstvo movement and his slogan: "Under the play of great Russia we will take Lithuania" alienated representatives of sma

nationalities from his activity. The position of Jedinstvo was named as “Great Russian Chauvinism”³¹.

According to the data of the Survey conducted in Vilnius on April 29-May 6, 1990, 8 % of the population of the capital have supported Jedinstvo movement, 8 % - CPL (CPUs), 10 % - Independent LPC, 46 % - Sąjūdis. Sąjūdis and independent LPC was supported by 87 % of Lithuanians, 30 % of Poles, 20 % of Russians³². These findings may be encouraged by the following data. The rusophones population was divided in two groups: (1) supporters of Independence of Lithuania and (2) opponents of Independence. Answering the question “Would you like The Supreme Council of Lithuania Abolished the Act of Restoration of Independence of March 11?” 42 % of Russians and 30 % of Poles said “yes”, however, 42 % of Russians and 48 % of Poles said - “no”³³.

Actually, Jedinstvo served as an arm of the pro-Moscow party splinter group. On the other hand, its activities complicated Lithuania’s minorities politics (...) and its early activism drew the attention of the Government and Sąjūdis to Polish and Russian problems³⁴. Jedinstvo along the LCP(CPSU) were abolished after Moscow putsch in August, 1991.

Lithuanian Polish Union (LPU), the first organization representing Polish minority of Lithuania, began its activity in May, 1988. The first Chairman of the LPU, the editor of the Polish weekly *Czerwony Sztandar*, sought to unite the Polish population representing organizations under the single center in Vilnius. There are four districts of Lithuania - Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Trakai and Švenčionys, which are predominantly inhabited by Poles. In Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts (63.5 and 79.6 per cent respectively) Poles makes up the absolute majority³⁵. Formally the LPU was established and politicized in May, 1989 (Table 2).

³¹ Vardys S. V., Sedaitis J.B. Lithuania. The Rebel Nation. - Oxford: Westview Press, 1997.

³² Clemens W.C. Baltic Independence and Russian Empire. - New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. - P. 202.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Clemens. Op cit. - P. 116.

³⁵ Matakas, J. The Problems of Ethnic Minorities in Lithuania// Lithuania Today. November 1992. Issue 6. - P. 12.

At very beginning the LPU sought to represent cultural interests of Polish minority. It demanded to extend network of kindergardens and schools, more places for Polish students in universities, to establish Polish Consulate in Vilnius, to retranslate the First Polish TV Programme.

During the 1990 election to the local councils in the Šalčininkai and Vilnius districts an overwhelming victory was gained by pro-Soviet Communists forces. Back in the spring of 1989 the necessity of granting Vilnius an autonomous status was actively raised in areas primarily inhabited by Polish communities. Both the LPU and the LCP (CPSU) became active supporters of a Polish autonomy. The representation of the Polish ethnic minority encountered certain problems until end of August, 1991 since its interests were basically expressed by supporters of the CPSU. On September 4, 1991, the Lithuanian Parliament passed a decision "On the dissolution of the local councils in the Šalčininkai and Vilnius districts well as Sniečkus". The dissolution of these councils helped to organize multi-party, multi mandate elections and expand the rights of ethnic minorities here³⁶.

According to the new law of local elections passed in Summer of 1994, only political parties may nominate their candidates by the party list. This law stimulated different political movements and organizations to reorganize their structures and registered themselves on the party status. The LPU was forced to solve a dilemma: either to become a political party or to remain societal organization by its character. Debates concerning new situation discovered disagreements and even hostility among Polish leaders.

The Lithuanian Polish Electoral Action (LPEA) was established on 28th of August, 1994 at the 5th Congress of LPU. The main goal of the Program of LPEA is to guarantee equal political, social and economic rights for all citizens of Lithuania irrespective of their ethnicity. Declaring the weakness of Lithuanian democracy in the Electoral Program of Seimas elections'1996 LPEA claims for need to establish the institution of ombudsmen in order to safeguard the rights of ethnic minorities.

³⁶ Matakas, J. Op. cit.- P. 12-13.

The LPEA particular attention pays to issues of local government. The main points of its Program relates to the extension of the of ownership rights of local councils, the separation of powers between the local councils and the districts, the higher administrative-territorial units of self-government of Lithuania.

The 5th congress has continued its work on March 18, 1995. The delegates decided to join all Polish organizations (scientists', physicians', Catholics' and others) under single association.

The Chairman of LPEA J. Sinkiewicz emphasized that LPEA is only political force which aims is to defend interests of the population of Vilnius' county because the candidates nominated for the local elections of 1995 comprises representatives of a nationalities. There were 40 Russians, 8 Byelorussians and 4 Lithuanians on the electoral list of LPEA.

On the other hand, he asked why some members of the LPU are nominated by other political parties of Lithuania. For instance, S. Korczinsky, the chief of Vilnius branch of the LPU was nominated by the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP). R. Maicekianec claimed the members of Seimas A. Plokszto, Z. Semenovicz and the head of Radio Programme "Znad Wili" for contradictions with opinions of the LPU. According to R. Maicekianec, only the weekly "Kurier Wilenski" correctly describes activities of the LPU.

The Chairman of the LPU R. Maicekianec called to support the LPEA in the local elections of 1995. The headman of Polish faction of Seimas Z. Semenovicz argued that most important are the final result - to better represent interests and needs of Polish minorities.

In spite of divergent positions of Polish leaders, the local elections of 1995 was most successful for LPEA. It wins 68 mandates. However, the support to LPEA among the Polish population obviously declined during following national and local elections.

In contrast to Polish organizational capacities, the Russians have not formed political organization by the middle of 1995 (Table 2). Their status has changed from being part of the Russian majority in the Soviet Union with obvious privileges concerning languages and leading positions to being a minority in the Independent Lithuania. Such

kind of changes caused a part of Russian population to emigrate to Russia and others Republics of the former Soviet Union. However, the greater portion of Russians preferred to stay in Lithuania and take part in the making of democratic Lithuanian state.

The Lithuanian Russians Union (LRU) with a status of political party was established on 29th of October, 1995. It aimed to “unite Lithuanian Russians’ Diaspora and to represent its interest throughout Seimas elections and co-operation with higher authorities of Lithuania”³⁷. LRU sought to coordinate activities of around 30 Russians societal organizations and clubs and to make impact for political participation of Russians in political life of Lithuania. On the other hand, its goal is to defend social and economic interest of Russian population.

However, the representative of the Confederation of Lithuanian Russians associations Michail Maszkov argued that the LRU is state organization established for one goal - to keep the electorate of LDLP³⁸.

Political parties and political organizations of ethnic minorities (1988-1997)

Party/ organization	Established	Registered	Membership the end of 1997	Chairman	Representation in Parliament		
					1990	1992	1996
Jedinstvo	13/10/88	-	unknown	Valery Ivanovas	-		
Polish Union	05/ 05/ 1989	10/08/92	10000	Rychard Maceikianec	8	4	-
Polish Election Action	28/08/94	21/10/94	1000	Jan Sienkiewicz	-	-	2
Alliance of LithuanianCitizens	29/07/96 Alliance of Ethnic Minorities	06/02/97	800	M. Vaskavicius	-	-	-
Lithuanian Russian Union	28/10/95	28/12/95	500	S. Dmitrejev	-	-	-

Source: Lietuvos politinės partijos ir partinė sistema. VU TSPMI Studijų saltiniai ‘6. - Kaunas: Naujasis lankas, 1997. -P. 1059.

The third political organization of ethnic minorities was established on 29th of July, 1996. At very beginning it was named as the Alliance of Ethnic Minorities, and latter

³⁷ Ākurta Lietuvos rusø sàjunga // Diena. - October 31, 1995.

renamed to the Alliance of Lithuanian Citizens (ALC). The Program of the ALC claims for any restrictions of the human rights on the ground of ethnicity, against assimilation and segregation, for the development and maintenance of the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities.

The economic part of the Program of ALC follows the liberal traditions. The main principle is individual's priority to the state, non interference of the state to private life. The ALC support an idea of establishing of non-governmental institutions to watch implementation of international conventions safeguarding of rights of ethnic minorities. Concerning foreign policy, the ALC claims for neutral status of Lithuanian Republic but wider participation in various international economic blocs and unions.

3.2 PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN POLITICS

Since organizational potentiality of ethnic minorities are growing one could expect extension of their representation in central and local government. However, data shows decline of representation of ethnic minorities even in local government as well as growing political passivity among the rusophones population. During the first truly democratic elections to the Supreme Council in the February 24, 1990 many non-Lithuanians share the goals of the Sąjūdis platform and do not see Lithuanian independence as a threat to their national cultures. However, the poor economic situation and the destabilized political atmosphere have aggravated tensions between various national groups and the majority Lithuanian population. Among 472 candidates nominated to Supreme Council were 398 Lithuanians, 30 Russians, 30 Poles, 6 Byelorussians, 2 Jews, and 2 Ukrainians³⁹.

3.2.1 Representation of Ethnic Minorities in the Bodies of Central and Local Government

³⁸ Ganusauskas E. Lietuvos rusus bandys suvienyti nauja organizacija // Lietuvos rytas. - December 19, 1995.

³⁹ Ibid. - P. 20.

Although some members of the nearly 300,000-strong Polish minority were involved in Yedinstvo, most were represented by more moderate the LPU. The only candidate of Yedinstvo was Valery Ivanov.

The LPU nominated candidate was Jan Sienkiewicz described his platform as “similar” to that of Sajūdis”, but added that a democratic, independent Lithuania must also be a Lithuania free from nationalism and totalitarinism.⁴⁰ The LPU supported also 3 of candidates nominated by LCP(CPSU), 2 - by Sajūdis, 2 - by independent LCP⁴¹. The Polish fraction in Supreme Council was established on 23th of September, 1990. It compromised 8 members of the Supreme Council.

On the eve of the Seimas elections of 1992 the new electoral law introduced the mixed electoral system. 71 of the seats of the Seimas have been elected by absolute majority voting, and 70 seats - by proportional system with the 4 % threshold with any threshold for minority parties.

The majority of the political parties do not distance themselves from Lithuania's ethnic minorities. Both their election programs and campaigning, especially of the LDLP and Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), contain promises about providing firm quarantines for the rights and freedoms to other nationalities. The LPU nominated the list of 25 candidates. Due favorable electoral law the LPU won 2 seats in the single- mandate districts and 2 seats in the multi-mandate district with the support of 2,07 % of votes.

Before the national elections of 1996 Seimas passed a new wording of the Seimas electoral law. The new threshold for the parties' lists was changed from 4 % to 5 % and from 6 % to 7 % for coalitions. The parties of ethnic minorities had to run the elections on the equal conditions. According to official data of the Highest Electoral Commission, the LPEA was supported by 2.97 % of eligible voters, the ALC - by 2.42 % and the LRU - by 1.35 %. 2 candidates of the LPEA were elected in the single-mandate districts, however one of them was elected in the repeated elections in Vilnius-Šalčininkai electoral

⁴⁰ Elections in the Baltic States and Soviet Republic. A. Compendium of Reports on Parliamentary Elections Held in 1990. - Washington, DC. December, 1990. - P. 18.

⁴¹ Sliesoriūnas G. Lenkø frakcija // Dienovidis, 1991 gegužės 18-24d.

district on the 13th of April, 1997)⁴². Accordingly, the composition of Seimas shows the tendency toward decline of the size of the representatives of ethnic minorities among the members of the Parliament (Table 3).

Table 3. Composition of the Seimas by breakdown of nationality in 1992 and 1996

Nationality	1992	1996
Lithuanians	131	127
Poles	6	3
Russians	3	2
Jews	1	1

On the other hand, the surveys' data improves that representatives of ethnic minorities tend to vote for other political parties of Lithuania (Table 4).

Table 4. Party preferences of ethnic minorities in Seimas elections of 1992 and 1996 (in per cent)

Political party	Lithuanians		Russians		Poles	
	1992	1996	1992	1996	1992	1996
LDLP	34.0	74.7	53.0	16.5	39.0	2.5
Women Party	-	92.5	-	5.0	-	2.5
LCU	4.0	93.0	0.0	2.8	2.0	1.4
LCDP	8.0	94.5	4.0	2.7	0.8	2.7
(HU/LC) Sąjūdis	27.0	95.7	8.0	1.7	12.0	1.7
LSDP	3.0	87.3	4.0	12.7	0.0	0.0
LPEP (Polish Union)	0.0	*	0.0	*	10.0	*

* No data.

Source: Lietuvos politinė kultūra. Tyrimo ataskaita. Vilnius. Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung: SIC ir TSPMI, 1994; Seimo rinkimai'96. Rinkiminio elgesio tyrimas. Ataskaita. Vilnius: Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas, 1997.

Undoubtedly, Russians from very beginning of multiparty elections in Lithuania remain supporters of the LDPL and of the LSDP. They have constituted 53 % of the electorate of the LDLP in the elections of 1992 and 39 % in 1996. LSDP was supported by 4% of Russians in 1992 and by 12.0 % in the elections of 1996 respectively. The

⁴² Valstybės žinios, 1997 balandžio 14 d. - P. 700.

LSDP attracted more Russian voters in the elections of 1996 because of the corruption, mistakes of the LDLP during its period in government (Table 4).

The striking shift in the party preferences of ethnic minorities one can see concerning support for the Homeland Union /Lithuanian Conservatives (HU/LC), originated from the former Sajūdis in May, 1993. If in the elections of 1992 among the supporters of Sajūdis there were 8 % of Russians and 12 % of Poles, in the elections of 1996 the HU/LC were supported only by 1.7 % of Russians as well as Poles (Table 4).

Despite the LPEA tends to represent all ethnic minorities of Lithuania, Poles are obviously predominant nationality among its electorate. Accordingly, the LPEA obtains wider support in the local elections. However, comparing the results of the elections to the councils of self-government territories (savivaldybės) of 1995 and 1997, it is clearly seen decreasing success of the LPEA (Table 5). Relatively high result of the ALC (2.42 %), the first time nominated its candidates in the elections to Seimas in 1997, and gradual decline in the support for the LPEA signaled about the changes in attitudes towards the political parties of ethnic minorities and particularly the LPEA.

Table 5. Political parties and organizations of ethnic minorities in local elections of 1995 and 1996

Political party / organization	Nominated candidates (number of electoral districts) (N)		Number of received mandates(N)		Winning votes in percents	
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
LPEA	11	8	69	58	4.64	3.91
LRU	-	3 (2C)*	-	C-17	-	0.47
LCA	-	3(2C)	-	10/C-17	-	1.35

* C - the joint list of coalition

Source: Official data of the Highest Electoral Commission of Lithuanian Republic of the local elections of 1995 and 1997.

The LPEA won majority in the Councils of Vilnius and Šalčininkai (58.8% and 52.0 % respectively) in the elections of 1995. However, the coalition of the LRU and ALC won 10 mandates in the Vilnius Council against 5 mandates received by the LPEA as well as in Klaipėda (7 mandates) in the local elections of 1997. Both Vilnius and Šalčininkai

districts remain traditionally dominated by Polish representatives. The LPEA received 23 of 27 mandates and 20 of 25 mandates respectively.

3.2.2 Political Participation and Political Activity of Ethnic Minorities

Although the growing support of ethnic minorities for new-established parties and/or to non-rusophones parties can be explained by the general tendency of the volatility among the Lithuanian electorate, the question of the decreasing political participation and activity indicates some peculiarities in the political behavior of non-Lithuanians.

The Survey of political culture of Lithuania conducted in November 25- December 14, 1994 discovered some differences between Lithuanians, Russians and Poles. The data shows that 53 % of Lithuanians, 40% of Russians and 38 % of Poles are interested in politics against 8%, 9% and 19 % not interested in politics (respectively)⁴³.

Concerning issues of efficacy in politics, the most optimistic there were Lithuanians. The mean of the answers to the question "How much politics of our country, according to your opinion, depends on your will?" (in the scale from 1 to 10, where '1' means "absolutely does not depend" and '10' - very much depends) was 3.51 among Lithuanian respondents, 2.52 among Russians and 2.01 among Poles⁴⁴.

Lithuanians also are more active than Poles and Russians. According to the data of Surveys of November 1992 and April 1995, 31 % of Poles, 21% of Russians and 13 % of Lithuanians did not participate in the Seimas elections of 1992 and 43%, 51 % and 40% respectively in the local elections of 1995⁴⁵.

The evidence can be improved by the statistical data of turnout of the Seimas elections' 1996 in the East-South Lithuania. Even the repeated elections in the single-mandate districts to Seimas failed because of the low participation of voters. According to the rules of the Electoral law of Seimas elections, the election in the single-mandate

⁴³ Lietuvos politinė kultūra. Tyrimo ataskaita. - Vilnius. Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung:

SIC ir TSPMI, 1994. - P. 14.

⁴⁴ Ibid. - P. 27.

constituencies is gained if 40% of eligible voters came to vote. All that facts indicates the lowest political integration of the Polish ethnic minority of Lithuania.

3.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF NATIONAL MINORITIES: LITHUANIA TOWARDS MULTI-NATIONAL DEMOCRACY

In Lithuania, like in most other East Central European countries, the process of transition to democracy was closely connected with national revival. In politics, it revealed itself by “ethnification of politics”⁴⁶ tendency. Then the task for such countries is to “reduce the political relevance of ethnicity”⁴⁷. In Lithuania the provision that *demos* and *nation* are different conceptions has been dominating already from the origin of “Sąjūdis”, which means that the Lithuanian political elite and the largest part of society has accepted national minorities as an integrated part of *demos*. This concept evolved more towards the inclusionary than exclusionary strategy concerning national minorities. Nevertheless, the shift from ethnification towards the inclusionary policy including the integration of national minorities has priority at the stage of consolidation of democracy. In the national policy, this shift means evolution from ethnic reduction when the man’s belonging to a certain ethnic group is considered as the main point of his identity towards conditions creating multiplication of identity (professional, religious, cultural, and etc.) - multinational democracy. Such a political system grants varying degrees of recognition of group rights to the minority. These group rights include political freedom to organize parties representing the minority or possibly bilingualism in education and some public services, allowing the private organization of minority cultural and educational life.⁴⁸ The key

⁴⁵ Gaidys V. Dynamic of Party Preferences in 1989-1996 // Taljūnaitė M. (ed.). Changes of Identity Modern Lithuania. Social Studies.. Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996. - P. 81.

⁴⁶ Offe C. Varieties of Transition. The East European and East German Experience. - Oxford: Polity Press. - P. 196.

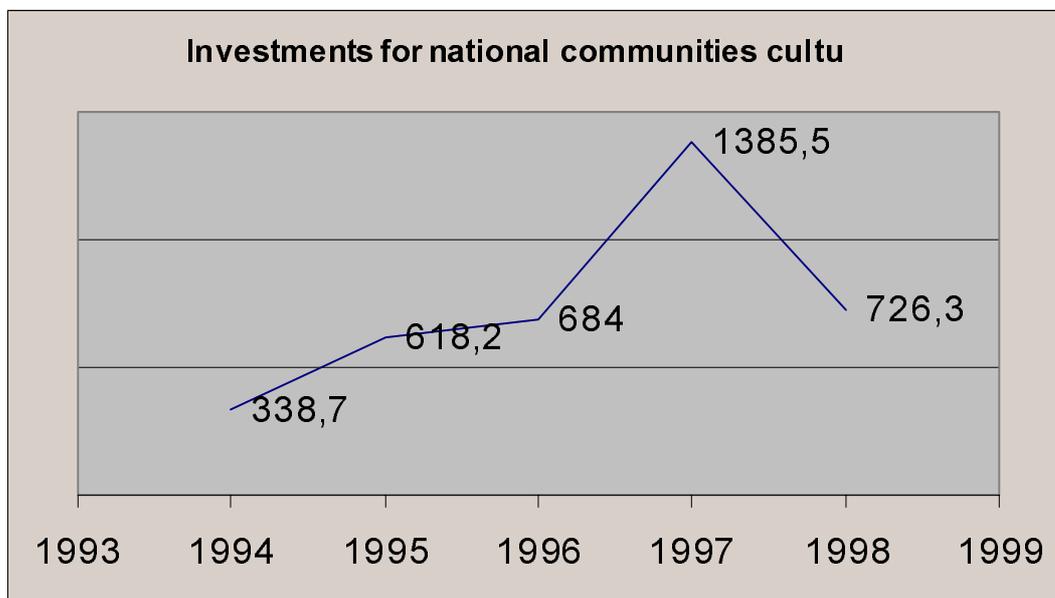
⁴⁷ Grey Robert D. (ed.). Democratic Theory and Post-Communist Change. - New Jersey: Prentice Hall. - P. 209.

⁴⁸ Linz J, Stepan A. Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe. - Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. - P. 429.

question for a democratic multinational state is whether the minorities have opportunities to multiple identities and loyalties.

According to the data of the Department of National Minorities and Regional Problems ⁴⁹ today more than 200 social organizations of national minorities carry out their activities in Lithuania. The representatives of 17 nationalities have been united by these organizations: Armenians, Azerbaijanians, Byelorussians, Gipsies, Estonians, Greeks, Georgians, Karaites, Latvians, Poles, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Hungarians, Germans, and Jews (in all, the people of 109 nationalities live in Lithuania). In May, 1991 the House of National Communities was established in Vilnius. Most organizations and clubs of national minorities have been established in this House. In 1991, for the first time in post-war years a separate article of expense was introduced in the state budget for the purposes of national minorities, and assets for the support of the culture of national minorities were allotted.

Figure 1.



Source: Department of National Minorities and Regional Problems (Investments are in thousand Lt)

3.3.1. The Lithuanian Russian National Minority

⁴⁹ The author thanks the deputy director of the department S.Vidtmann and R. Paliukiene for the latest data about national minorities presented by them.

In 1997 304.8 thousand Russians or 8.2% of the total population of the country lived in Lithuania. Russians live all over the territory of the country. However, most Russians have settled in Vilnius, Klaipeda, and other large cities. The absolute majority of Russians (98%) are the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania⁵⁰. This self-determination of Russians should be assessed as the civil loyalty of Lithuanian Russians.

The Russian social organizations carry out active social and cultural activities. In 1998, 56 Russian social organizations carried out their activities in Lithuania, among the 35 organizations in Vilnius. In 1997/1998 in Lithuania, we had 157 secondary schools in which pupils were taught in Russian. 49,347 pupils attended these schools, which is 9% of the total number of pupils in Lithuania. The number of pupils attending Russian schools has been decreasing for the latest years. For this reason, some schools are under reorganization. In single cases, the reorganization of an exclusively social-economic character got a political aspect and attempts to stir up national hatred were noticed. The latest accident is the reorganization of the secondary schools, which bears the name of M.Dobuzinsky, in the city of Vilnius⁵¹. 2,953 Russian students attended Lithuanian professional schools in 1997/1998, which is 5.6% of the total number of students of these schools. 2,187 students of the Russian nationality attended Lithuanian higher schools (colleges), which is 7.2% of the total number of students. 1,973 Russians attended universities, which is 3.7% of the total number of students of universities.

As of the beginning of 1998, 38 periodicals in Russian were published in Lithuania (31 newspapers and 7 magazines). The following Russian periodicals may be mentioned: "Golos Litvy", "Rabocy Litvy", "Lietuvos rytas", "Litovsky kurjer", "Malaja gazeta", "Pirmadienis", "Respublika", "Salcia", "Vakarines naujenos", "Visaginas" and others. Newspapers are issued in Vilnius, Klaipeda, Visaginas, Šiauliai, and Šalčininkai. Russian private publishing houses have been established in the country. Lithuanian radio and state television are broadcasting special programs in Russian. The 1st radio program daily broadcasts a 1-hour information program in Russian; the 2nd radio program daily

⁵⁰ Grigas R. (ed.). *Paribio Lietuva. Sociologine Paribio gyventoju integravimosi i Lietuvos valstybe apybraiza*. - Vilnius, 1996. - P. 203.

⁵¹ *Lietuvos rytas*. - April 14, 1998.

broadcasts a 0.5-hour program in Russian. Lithuanian National TV broadcasts in Russian a 10-minute news program on working days, shows the information publicistic program “Telartel” in Russian on Thursdays and a periodical Orthodox Christian educational program “Krikschioni žodis” in Russian.

Cable TV retranslates the programs of television companies from Russia. In December, 1997 the Russian Cultural Center established the radio station “Radio 7”, which is financed by the program of the Council of Europe - “Confidence - Building Measures Program”. The Lithuanian Russian Drama Theater was established in Vilnius in 1946 and continues to stage performances in Russian until now; Russian art galleries were established in Vilnius in 1992, in Klaipeda - in 1994; we have Russian children theaters “Krasnaja kurica” and “Zaliasis zibintas”, the mixed chorus “Ruskaja klasika”. The days of art of Russian schools “Muza” are held every year from 1995.

The activities of Russian religious communities form the important part of spiritual life and religious identity. 58 communities of Russian old-believers and 41 communities of Orthodox Christians carried their activities in 1995. The monastery-nunnery of Russian old believers exists and carries out its activities in Vilnius from the post-war years. The property unlawfully appropriated in the years of the soviet regime, meeting-houses of believers are being returned to Lithuanian Russian old believers and Orthodox Christians. The Government renders support for the repair and reconstruction of buildings that are being returned.

3.3.2. The Polish National Minority

256.6 thousand Poles lived in Lithuania in 1997, which is 6.9% of the total population of Lithuania. More than 90% of them live in Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Trakai, Švenčionys, and the districts of Vilnius. Factually, all poles (over 99%) are the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania⁵².

⁵² Lithuanian Society in Social Transition /Ed. by M.Taljunaite. - Vilnius: Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law, 1995. - P. 54.

This year 46 Polish social organizations carried out their activities in Vilnius, the district of Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Visaginas, and other settlements. The most important and the largest Polish organization is the Lithuanian Association of Poles (LAP), which was established in 1989. It consists of the Central Council and 10 city and district divisions. Over 5,000 were united by this organization in 1989, about 5,000 - in 1990, 11,000 - in 1991, 8,000 members - 1994. The Legal Consulting Office, the Publishing Bureau, the Council of the Art Organization carry out their activities under the management of the LAP⁵³.

In 1997/1998 there were 125 secondary Polish schools in Lithuania. 20,263 Poles attended these schools, which is 3.7% of the total number of pupils of secondary schools. In 1990/1991 we had 11,407 pupils who attended Polish schools, which was 2.3% of the total number of pupils⁵⁴. Thus, the number of pupils who attended Polish schools increased twice as much for the latest years. In these schools all subjects, except the Lithuanian language and literature, are taught in Polish. We have private Polish educational institutions as well (for example, the Polish Children Aesthetic School). 3,027 Polish students attended professional schools in 1997/1998 (which is 5.7% of the total number of students of these schools); 1,182 Polish students attended higher school (colleges) (3.9% of students of these schools). Two higher schools (colleges) have groups in which students are taught in Polish, whereas in the Vilnius Higher Agricultural School students are taught exclusively in Polish. The Vilnius Higher Pedagogical Schools began to train tutors for Polish pre-school educational institutions from 1989, and the teachers for primary classes in Polish schools. Pedagogues for Polish schools are trained in the Vilnius Pedagogical University from 1961. In 1997/1998 over 1,342 Poles attended Lithuanian universities (2.5% of total number of students of universities); in 1993/1994 this figure was 1,146, which was 2.3% of the total number of students⁵⁵. In 1961 the Polonistics Department was established in the Vilnius Pedagogical University. In 1994 the Department of Polish Culture and Literature was established in the Vilnius University and

⁵³ Vaitiekus S. Lietuvos lenkai. - Valstybinis nacionaliniu tyrimu centras, 1994. - P.46.

⁵⁴ Ibid. - P. 15.

⁵⁵ Ibid. - P.26.

students started studying these subjects. From 1989 some Poles study in universities in Poland. About 400 Lithuanian Poles studied in universities in Poland in 1998.

The Polish national majority has intensive cultural life in Lithuania. There were over 60 acting amateur Polish art groups of different genres in Lithuania in 1998. The festival of Polish amateur art groups “Kwiaty Polskie” and the days of Poland poetry are annually held beginning from 1989. There is the famous private Polish art gallery “Znad Willi” and the book-shop which bears the name of S.Korcinskis.

Mass media plays an important role in developing national and cultural identity and civil loyalty. 6 periodicals in Polish were published in 1998, among them 1 magazine. District newspapers in Polish are issued in the territories of local municipalities. From 1947 the 2nd program of Lithuanian radio every day broadcasts in Polish for 30 minutes. The first television programs in Polish appeared in 1989. Today these programs are shown once per week and last 30-35 minutes. The private Polish radio station “Znad Willi” was established and started its activities in 1992 (the director the signator of the Independence Act of Lithuania C.Okincicas). This station broadcasts round-the-clock. The number of its listeners is about 10% of the total population of Lithuania. The broadcast “Political saloon”, in which the representatives from the President’ administration, the Seimas, the Government, and other authorities take part, is very popular with listeners all over Lithuania. Taking into consideration requirements and requests of the Polish minority, 1st program of Polish TV is being retranslated from Poland (Polonia TV program is being retranslated from 1994). The programs of other television stations are being retranslated in Lithuania by means of cable TV as well.

The social religious life of the Polish minority has become more alive for the latest years. Today religious services in Polish are being carried in 71 parishes in Lithuania. The Vilnius priest seminary, which trains priests for the Vilnius diocese was restored and started its activities in 1994. The visit of John Paul II to Lithuania in September 1993 had a deep positive effect on the spirits of solidarity of nations.

3.3.3. The Byelorussian National Minority

54.5 thousand Byelorussians lived in Lithuania in 1997 (which is 1.5% of the population of Lithuania). Byelorussians have 18 social organizations in Lithuania (The Association of Social organizations of Lithuanian Byelorussians, the club of Lithuanian Byelorussians “Siabrina”, the Byelorussian language club of the district of Vilnius, which bears the name of F. Skorina, and other organizations). The Department of the Byelorussian Language, Literature, and Ethnic Culture, which trains specialists in the Byelorussian language was established in the Vilnius Pedagogical University in 1991. The Byelorussian community every year celebrates the day of independence of Byelorussia, organizes different exhibitions at which the exhibits created by the representatives of the Byelorussian nationality are shown. Until 1996 the newspaper “Nasa Niva” was issued in Lithuania. Unfortunately, because of a lack of assets its publications has been terminated. The monthly periodical “Runj” is published from 1997. 1st program of Lithuanian Radio broadcasts in Byelorussian for 10 minutes per day. From 1989 2nd program of Lithuanian Radio broadcasts a 30-minutes program on cultural and educational issues in Byelorussian. From 1990 10-minute program in Byelorussian is shown by Lithuanian TV twice per month.

3.4.4. Jewish National Minority

According to the data of the general census of the population, 12,392 Jews lived in Lithuania in 1989 (0.3% of the population of the country). This figure was 5,200 in 1997 (0.1%). Decrease in the number of Jews is connected with emigration (1991-1994). The social organizations of the Jewish community have been established since 1987. In December, 1987 the initiative group was established, which was attached to the Cultural Fund of Lithuania. This group has played the role of the origin of the Jewish Cultural Association and encouraged other national minorities to establish their associations. In 1991 the Council of Social Organizations of Lithuanian Jews, which has united 16 organizations in Vilnius, Kaunas, Siauliai, Klaipeda, Panevezys, Utena, and other cities, was established. The Jewish community is socially active. Apart from the mentioned organizations, about 10 different organization that unite people by their professional skill

and other interests have been established: the cultural club of Lithuanian Jews, the cultural center "Salom", the organization of Jewish women "Wizo", the association of Jewish physicians, which bears the name of Cemoch Sabad, the Lithuanian sport club "Makkabi", and different foundations.

Jewish education is being gradually restored. In autumn, 1989 the state Jewish school opened its doors for first pupils. In 1997/1998 there were 1-9 classes which were attended by about 200 pupils. Pupils of this school are taught in Lithuanian and Russian. The Hebrew language is taught as a second foreign language. In 1996 the religious Jewish school "Menachemo namai" was established. In 1997/1998 there were 1 - 4 classes in it which were attended by 20 pupils. The Jewish Sunday schools that are attended by children, young people, and adults have been established in Kaunas, Klaipeda, and Siauliai. The center of Judaism was established in the Vilnius University in 1990. The commemoration of 200-year anniversary of the death of the Jewish philosopher Elijah Gaon held in September 10-15, 1997 was a very important event in the social life of the country.

The cultural and historical heritage of Jews is protected, maintained, and studied by the State Jewish Museum, which was established in 1989. The Sector of Jewish Literature has been established in the House of Books where is one of the most precious in the world collections of books in Hebrew and Yiddish. Today this fund is a part of the Department of Judaism of the National Library, which bears the name of M.Mazvydas. Jews were maintaining their national culture by means of amateur culture from the sixteenth century. The international festival of modern music "Salom", the artistic level of which is comparable with the best cultural events organized in Lithuania, is held from 1994.

The self-consciousness and culture of Jews is supported by information means. The newspaper "Lietuvos Jeruzale" (Lithuanian Jerusalem) in Lithuanian, Yiddish, Russian, and English, which reflects the life of the community of Lithuanian Jews has been published since 1989. Lithuanian radio and television broadcast shows and programs for the people of the Jewish nationality. 2nd radio program broadcasts a 30-minute program in Yiddish on the first and the third Sunday of each month. The Lithuanian TV shows the 20-minute program "Menora" (in Lithuanian and Yiddish) once per month.

Three religious Jewish communities have been registered in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, and Siauliai. They have synagogues in Vilnius and Kaunas.

After restoring independence, the Government of Lithuania paid a great deal of attention to the victims of genocide of Jews. In 1990 the 23rd day of September was declared as the day of commemoration of victims of genocide of Jews in Lithuania. The memorial tombstones have been erected at the places of destruction of Jews all over the country.

Then in Lithuania each ethnicity have the chance to build its own associations and these organizations have an opportunity for influence in the political system. As the following analysis demonstrate Lithuania strongly follow inclusionary strategy. This strategy going from allowing private organization of minority cultural and educational lif to various consociational policies (financial support communal organizations from government, official bilingualism at the local level). There are all conditions that Lithuania could well become a consolidated multinational democracy.

3.4. THE AFFECT OF THE ECONOMIC REFORM ON THE INTEGRATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

In this Chapter we try to show if the economic reform that is being implemented in Lithuania - privatization, the restructure of economy, the restitution of land have becom the factor of multiplication of identity of national minorities or, to the contrary, the economic reform has the tendencies of ethnic reduction.

Most Lithuanian national minorities live in the districts of Eastern Lithuania (the districts of Ignalina, Moletai, Salcininkai, Sirvintai, Svencioniai, Trakai, Varena, Vilnius, and Zarasai). Here, the tenth part of the population of Lithuania lives, half of them are Lithuanians, the third part - Poles, the tenth part - Russians, other are Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Tatars, Karaites, and the people of other nationalities. Most residents of the districts of Salcininkai and Vilnius are Poles.

Taking into consideration the national specificity of the district of Vilnius and other districts of Eastern Lithuania, the economic, social, and cultural problems caused b historical circumstances, and the situation in reorganizing the economy of the country, the

Government of the Republic of Lithuania by Resolution No 882 of July 25, 1995 has adopted "The Program for the Social development of districts of Eastern Lithuania in 1996-2000". This Program has assessed the social development of districts of Eastern Lithuania for the latest years, has suggested advises as for the social development of these districts and investments in them so that to eliminate relative delay in the development of Eastern Lithuania and to integrate here residing national minorities into the social and political life of Lithuania.

3.4.1. Privatization and Foreign Investments

The first stage of privatization in Lithuania (1991-1995) was implemented for checks (vouchers) and was notable for its quickness. Later on, (from 1996) the second stage of privatization took place, which was implemented in cash on equal terms for both Lithuanians and foreigners. As for the beginning of 1997, over 2,500 private stock companies and over 3,000 personal enterprises were established in Lithuania. Today the private sector dominates in Lithuania; 67% of employees work in the private sector⁵⁶.

The privatization of state-owned property in Eastern Lithuania was faster than on the average in Lithuania. In 1991-1995 77% of assets due to be privatized were privatized in Eastern Lithuania, whereas in Lithuania on the whole this figure was only 66%⁵⁷. The following sectors were the leaders in privatization: consumer services, trade, transport companies, and construction organizations. While implementing reforms, the private sector was developed at a fast pace. Public and private stock companies have been established, a large number of them have found foreign partners and have been established as joint ventures with foreign capital. The specific feature of this district is prevalence in the number of individual enterprises that do not have the rights of a legal person. 64% of companies in Eastern Lithuania (this figure is 39% in Lithuania on the whole) have the status of a small company and enjoy tax privileges. However, the abundance of individual enterprises does not make noticeable influence on the development of economy; their

⁵⁶ Lithuanian Economic Reforms: Problems and Perspectives. - Vilnius: "Margi rastai", 1997. - P. 64.

⁵⁷ Program for the Social Development of Districts of Eastern Lithuania in 1996-2000. - Vilnius, 1995. - P. 30.

income is low, the rate of liquidation of such companies is high, they do not have investments in long-term projects since the loans of Lithuanian commercial banks for investing purposes are not favorable. The rate of foreign capital investments in the development of Eastern Lithuania is low. Only 98 joint ventures and a few branches of foreign firms have been established here. The Polish companies (41) are the leaders in establishing joint ventures in Eastern Lithuania⁵⁸. For the latest five years the process of investing in Eastern Lithuania has practically ceased.

The main point of the agricultural reform is the privatization of land and real estate. On the average, land in Lithuania is allowed to be used by persons who have established farms or by persons who have returned land for other agricultural activities, 47% of land that may be returned, whereas in Eastern Lithuania this figure is only 34%; the legally registered in Lithuania the right of possession to land - 16%, in Eastern Lithuania - 10% of the area of land that has been returned⁵⁹. The most likely reasons for this are the inadequate legal framework and the inefficiency of the bureaucratic system in implementing laws and state regulations. This may be the cause of certain tension among the Poles which, however, is administrative in nature and not ethnic.

Table 2. Connections with privatisation by ethnicity (%), 1994

Family has nationalized property:	Total	Lithuanians	Non Lithuanians	R
Yes	43.4	48.6	23.2	.21
No	56.6	51.4	76.8	
N=1447				

Source: Lithuanian Society in Social Transition. - P.33.

3.4.2. The Living Standards

⁵⁸ Ibid.- P.30-31.

⁵⁹ Ibid. - P. 17.

The monetary income of residents of Eastern Lithuania and Lithuania on the whole differ too much. In the 1st quarter, 1995 the average monetary income per Lithuanian economic entity (resident) was Lt 217, whereas this figure in Eastern Lithuania was L 183, which means less by 16%⁶⁰.

The main cause - the difference between wages and business income. In 1995, in Lithuania, the income received from wages per member of a family was Lt 129, whereas the income received from business per member of a family was Lt 18. In Eastern Lithuania these figures were appropriately Lt 101 (78% of the average Lithuanian wages) and Lt 8 (45% of the average Lithuanian business income). In the cities of Eastern Lithuania, monetary income per member of a family was 84% of the average income in Lithuania although the income of residents of villages was by 9% higher than appropriate average income in Lithuania⁶¹.

After comparing the monetary income of residents of Eastern Lithuania and Lithuania on the whole with the income norm - the minimal living standard, we may state that in 1995 the income of social-economic groups of residents in Eastern Lithuania (with the exception of none-employed non-agricultural workers) was by 20-50% less than the minimal living standard⁶².

Nevertheless, after assessing the living standard according to nationalities, it turned out that Poles had the most noticeable improvement in their financial situation.

Table 3. The evaluations of a financial situation according to a nationality since 1988 (%)

Nationalit	Improved	Remained unchanged	Gone worse	Don't know	Total
Lithuanians	10.5	10.6	64.5	13.9	100
Russians	5.9	4.6	80.9	8.6	100
Poles	15.6	6.3	66.7	11.5	100
Byelorussians	-	10.0	70.0	20.0	100

⁶⁰ Ibid. - P.48-49.

⁶¹ Ibid. - P. 49.

⁶² Lithuanian Economic Reforms: Practice and Perspectives. - P.246.

Ukrainians	-	7.7	76.9	15.4	100
Others	14.3	-	71.4	14.3	100

Source: Lithuanian Society in Social Transition. - P.56.

According to other indexes the living conditions and the sources of living of people of all nationalities in Eastern Lithuania are more or less similar. About half inquired persons have indicated wages as the main source of living. Poles have comparatively larger income from private business than Lithuanians (see Table 4).

Table 4. The source of income (%)

Category	Lithuanians	Poles
Employment	52.7	46.4
Private business	3.7	4.4
Farm	3.0	4.4
As hoc employment	2.0	2.0
Disability, retirement	15.5	21.5
Allowance	4.3	3.9
Family support	17.8	15.8
Other sources	1.0	1.5
Does not apply	0.2	0.2

Source: The Lithuanians in Poland. The Poles in Lithuania, 1994-p.95.

According to the data of statistical research, 11% of Lithuanians and 12% of Poles have indicated that they are unemployed. The average monthly income of both Poles and Lithuanians almost did not differ and was Lt 184 and Lt 188 correspondingly⁶³.

4. EXTERNAL NATIONAL "HOMELANDS" AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

⁶³ Program for the Social Development of Districts of Eastern Lithuania in 1996-2000. - P. 85.

Lithuanians are happy to remind that a friendly attitude of the Lithuania-state toward its citizens of foreign nationality has been known since the Middle Ages. In the aftermath of the restored independence Lithuania has, first, reiterated and protracted this tradition and, second, passed all but the most tolerant Laws on Citizenship and National Minorities not only in the Baltic states, but in the entire Central European region. The so-called zero version, which embeds the present state of affairs, has let the people of all Lithuania's nationalities join the public life both theoretically and in practice. On the other hand, it is necessary to notify that the "external factors", which, provisionally, can be called the Russian, the Polish, and the Byelorussian factors, tried to "adjust" this process. During the eight-year-independence period, the role of these aforementioned factors was not equivalent: three countries - USSR (Russia), Poland and the Belarus SSR – provided their initial appeal to the national question in Lithuania*, had tried to sway the territorial and national-civil integrality of Lithuanian in the period from 1990 to 1992; later on it was only Russia to remain important.

These were the Soviet authorities that tried to emanate the so-called issue of the minority rights in Lithuania as a weapon to maintain the integrity of the Soviet Union. When forced to take action in 1988 and 1989, they fell back on their established stereotypes and sought to combat "nationalism" with other "nationalism's", encouraging "interethnic conflict". In Lithuania this meant encouraging Russians and Poles to object to the behavior and demands of the Lithuanians. According to Gorbachev's last KGB chief, "The Committee of State Security [KGB] stood at the sources of founding 'international fronts' in the union republics displaying obstinacy in relations with the center"⁶⁴.

Moscow wanted to fall back into its preferred role as "peacemaker", restoring order among its unruly children who were presumably incapable of striking out on their own. For that reason the "Socialist Movement for Perestroika in Lithuania - Edinstvo" announced its existence. Its platform called for continued ties with USSR. The Soviet military enthusiastically supported Edinstvo, trumpeting reports of discrimination against

* If we talk about the national question in Lithuania with respect to this argument, we have in mind the argumentation as proposed by the external factors regarding the violations of civil, political, etc. rights of the respective ethnic minorities in Lithuania.

Russians in republic⁶⁵. Moscow loyalists also paid special attention to advancing the interests of the Poles in Lithuania, although the Poles previously had enjoyed few favors from the rulers of the Soviet Union⁶⁶. The representatives of Soviet authorities (KGB, Communist Party) encouraged people in the districts of Šalčininkai, Trakai and Švenčioniai to register complaints and make demands of the authorities in Vilnius⁶⁷

Moscow continued to mobilize the Russian and Polish minorities after the restoration of the Lithuanian State in 1990-1991. It especially and scrupulously watched the development of the Lithuanian-Polish relations. No secret, in the late 1980s and early 1990s many Lithuanian officials expected Poland to make claims to Lithuanian territory, which belonged to Poland in 1939. On the other hand, soon after the events of March 11th, the USSR was perceived to be most serious threat to Lithuania.

Meanwhile Warsaw clearly stated its support for the Lithuanian independence. President Lech Wałęsa clearly stressed his personal support for the Lithuanians; and a Club of Friends of Lithuania sprang up in Warsaw despite the fact that the pro-Moscow Poles in Lithuania rejected Poland's advice to support the Lithuanians, saying that their compatriots across the border did not understand the situation (ten Poles parliamentarians were elected to the Lithuanian Supreme Council; six of them abstained from the voting for the independence of Lithuania on March 11, 1990⁶⁸). The first foreigner to greet the Supreme Council of Lithuania on the occasion of the Reestablishment of Independence was the Polish senator T. Kłopotowski, followed thereafter by visits: on March 23, 1990 a delegation of the Supreme Council visited Warsaw; on March 27 a delegation from the Polish Sejm visited Vilnius and so on. These were not merely courtesy calls because in October Poland supported granting observer status to Lithuania in CSCO, which was followed in January, 1991 by a demand from Poland to call session of the CSCO to discuss the crackdown of the Soviet military and gave permission for the establishment o

⁶⁴ Senn A. E. *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania*. - New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. - P. 30 .

⁶⁵ *Krasnaya zvezda*. - November 30, 1988.

⁶⁶ Armstrong B. The Ethnic Scene in the Soviet Union // *Journal of Soviet Nationalities*. - No. 1. - P. 38-39.

⁶⁷ Senn A. E. *Op. cit.* - P.48.

⁶⁸ For more details, see: Lieven A. *The Baltic Revolution*. - New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1993. - P. 158-173.

a Lithuanian Information Bureau in Warsaw. It was not coincidental that the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Algirdas Saudargas traveled to Warsaw with the authority to form government in exile (at the very same time, Zbigniew Brzezinski was visiting the Polish capital and later wittily observed that, unfortunately, it was not he but the Foreign Minister of Lithuania who was the center of attraction). Even though the government remained in Vilnius and Poland was no great hurry to recognize the independence of Lithuania, it nevertheless became clear, that the Polish factor was assuming a special and new importance for Lithuania - in an effort to fulfill the prophecy of her geopolitical situation and counterbalance the threat posed by Moscow, attempts were made to return to Lithuania's natural geopolitical gravitation, i.e. to active relations with Poland⁶⁹. To tell the truth, this process was not consistent.

As early as the spring of 1991 forces were activated in the districts of the southeastern of Lithuania under the banner of "autonomy", which sought to destabilize the situation in the country, stop the movement in the direction of independence and sever the growing rapprochement between Lithuania and Poland. It is necessary to recognize that Moscow almost achieved its goal.

Even though there were no analogies in history to an artificial Polish-Russian union in Lithuania, the Soviets were successful in cooling relations between Vilnius and Warsaw. While the Polish government did not support the "autonomists" and was one of the first to recognize Lithuania, the question of the Polish ethnic minority became a point of contention in the relations between the two countries after the September 4th, 1991 decision by the Supreme Council (there were dissolved the institutions of local administration in the districts of Vilnius and Šalčininkai where the Poles were particularly numerous*), directed against Moscow's intrigues in southeastern Lithuania. In Lithuania,

⁶⁹ For more details, see: Lopata R., Žalys V. Lietuvos geopolitinis kodas // Politologija. 1995. Nr. 1(6). - P. 13 - 21; In Search of Geopolitical Code // Lithuania in the World. 1995. -Vol. 3. - No. 4. - P. 12 - 15.

*Inspired by Moscow, the deputies of Vilnius and Šalčininkai regional councils had set attempts to establish a politically autonomous Vilnius region, which, in spite of Lithuania's complete success in renouncing the domain of Moscow, could still remain under the custody of Moscow. In short, this would have resembled the scenario of the so-called Padnestre republic in Moldova. See: Sirutavičius V., Nekrašas E., Lopata R. (eds.). Svarbiausios Lietuvos Respublikos tarptautinės sutartys. 1918-1995. - Vilnius, 1997. - P. 139.

this was perceived to be a new threat. The Minister of Defense Audrius Butkevičius even went so far as saying that Poland raised the greatest threat to Lithuanians. Notwithstanding, the aforementioned statement reflected the views of the Lithuanian government. At the same time, the Chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis announced that the Lithuanian route to Europe goes through Scandinavia, while Wałęsa in a letter to Landsbergis described Lithuanian-Polish relations as being in “near crisis”. In 1992 a great number of the reprehending articles had appeared in the Polish press, which had first of all inculpated Lithuanians for discriminating the Lithuania’s Poles: as though all the Poles in Lithuania were being forced to learn and use the Lithuanian language, the Polish schools were closed, the Polish surnames turned into the Lithuanian, the private property not returned, etc.

In addition, at this same time the danger of the “Byelarusian irredenta” appeared on the horizon of the Lithuanian political life. On 24 February 1992, Byelarusian foreign minister Piotr Krauchanka told a visiting European Community delegation in Minsk that he wanted to record his country’s claim to Lithuanian border territory in the presence of an international audience. When asked whether the claims extended to Vilnius, foreign minister said “yes”⁷⁰. To tell the truth, Byelarusian claims on Lithuania first surfaced in the wake of Lithuania’s declaration of independence. On March 29, 1990, the presidium of the Byelorusian SSR Supreme Soviet informed Lithuania it would demand the return of former Byelorusian lands if Lithuania seceded from the Soviet Union⁷¹. The presidium cited the USSR Supreme Soviet’s condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - by which these lands first fell within the Soviet sphere of influence in 1939 - and the Lithuanian government’s non-recognition of its incorporation into the USSR, and said the Byelorusian SSR would no longer be bound by the decrees of 1939-940 which transferred Byelorusian territory to Lithuania.

The claims advanced by the Byelorusian SSR were part of Moscow’s effort to press Vilnius to withdraw Lithuania’s independence declaration. The hand of Moscow was

⁷⁰ Girnius S. Belarus Lays Territorial Claims on Lithuania // RFE/RL Daily Report. - 25 February 1992. - P. 4.

⁷¹ Mihalisko K. Byelorusia Lays Claim to Lithuanian Territory in Report on the USSR // Report on the USSR. - 13 April 1990. - P. 21.

also felt in 1992 when there were talks between Vilnius and Minsk to demarcate an agreed-upon border between the two countries, however, the foundations for Krauchanka's assertion were laid by the Byelorussian intellectuals. Their arguments rest on two premises: that Vilnius ought to belong to Belarus because Belarus is the heir of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus' and Samogitia, which existed from the thirteenth century to 1795 and whose capital was Vilnius; and that the Slavs of the region surrounding Vilnius - identifying themselves as Poles for most of this century - are really Byelorussians who ought to be reunited with the motherland⁷² These intellectuals contended that the most important argument in favor of the Byelorussian character of the Vilnius region was the speech of its inhabitants, which they termed "natural Byelorussian speech", and also pointed to the Byelorussian customs and folklore of the area. If the inhabitants of this region called themselves Poles, the argumentation asserted, it was mainly a political choice prompted by the threats of Lituianization and Russification, not a metamorphosis of their ethno-cultural essence. Had the Byelorussian SSR been willing to come to defense of the inhabitants of the Vilnius region, they might have been willing to change their national allegiance⁷³.

We must admit, that during this critical period of 1992 Lithuanians set a great deal of efforts in order to neutralize the threat of eventual irritants. First of all, the visit of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs K. Skubiszewski to Lithuania was prepared in January. During this visit the declaration, which gave an impulse to the preliminary works concerning the Polish-Lithuanian Friendship and Cooperation Agreement, was proclaimed. In autumn, the Supreme Council of Lithuania fixed the date of the elections into the regional councils of Vilnius and Šalčininkai. The core obstacle, which was impeding the productive negotiations on the conclusion of the Treaty, became removed. The Treaty, which was signed on the 26th of April, 1994 and ratified a little later, has opened the new perspectives for expanding and developing of the relations between Lithuania and Poland and has ascertained a firm ground to a political, military, economic, cultural, etc. co-

⁷² Burant S. Belarus and the "Byelorussian irredenta" in Lithuania // Nationalities Papers. - 1997. Vol. 25. - No. 4. - P. 643.

⁷³ Burant S. Ibidem. - P. 646.

operation among the countries. With this Treaty not only the territorial integrity of both countries was recognized (Article 2), but the rights of the national minorities – which would be based upon the international principles and standards regarding the prevention of the minority rights - namely Poles in Lithuania and Lithuanians in Poland, were discussed due to a special intent (Articles 13-20)⁷⁴.

Likewise in parallel, did Lithuanians “perform” with Byelorussia. In January 1992, at a summit between Landsbergis and then-Byelorussian Parliamentary Chairman Stanislav Shushkevich, and later in February during a one-day visit to Vilnius for talks with Landsbergis, Byelorussian leader assured Lithuanian that Belarus had no claims on their territory⁷⁵. Despite some technical questions (for instance, the question of the dependence of the small railway station Adučiškės), the negotiations between the Lithuanians and Byelorussians on the delimitation of the borders were proceeding in more or less expeditious manner and had ended with the signing and ratification of the Treaty on the 6th of February, 1995.

Summing up the period from 1992 to 1995, we can call it *a transitional period*, in a sense, that during these years the Lithuanians have managed to neutralize the eventual pressures of Poland and Belarus on the national question (more precisely – the Polish and the Byelorussian aspects of this question^{*}). Meanwhile, the Russian aspect of the national question in Lithuania requires a more detailed scrutiny and comments and first of all, however paradoxical it may seem, because this aspect still remains an aspect. Herein, we have in mind a sort of the question of legitimacy of the so-called Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic states, put in front to the observance of not only Russia, but of the Western countries as well.

It is hardly a secret that Lithuania and others Baltic states still have a special position in the community of states which have emerged from the ruins of the Soviet empire: the Eastern Baltic sub-region, not falling into Eastern and Central Europe, is,

⁷⁴ Sirutavičius V., Nekrašas E., Lopata R. Svarbiausios Lietuvos Respublikos tarptautinės sutartys. 1918-1995. - Vilnius, 1997. - P. 141-152.

⁷⁵ Burant S. Op. cit. - P. 647-648.

^{*}Beyond doubt, in here we must highlight, that these aspects, having in mind, on the one hand, the number of Poles and the Byelorussians in Lithuania and, on the other hand, the eventual historical-legal

furthermore, not included within the Nordic group; that is, to say, understood to be a separate geopolitical unit. Such ambiguity is evoked by aggregation of factors: the pre-cold war tradition, specifics of a transitional period, an accommodation with the interests of Russia⁷⁶. It is hardly a secret that the Western diplomacy does not manage to find the solution to a trialem – collective security, national self-determination and the national minorities. Likewise, it is not a secret that for a long time has Russia – owing to the invocation of the so-called concept of the Near Abroad, which was dedicated to the Baltic states as well – detained any efforts to pass beyond the static situation. Without delving into the genesis of this concept and to the overall place of Russia in the post-cold war world-order itself^{**}, we will emphasize, that in spite of Yevgeny Primakov's efforts to abandon this term in early 1996⁷⁷, it still remains alive. On the other hand, it is not clear enough, what associative imperative did the term of the Near Abroad acquire in Moscow with respect to Lithuania and other Baltic nations⁷⁸.

It was not until 1992-93 that Russia formulated the general guidelines of a new security and foreign policy. They were prevented, however, from being of an absolutely binding nature by deepening internal crisis and a changing external environment. These forced the decision-making center associated with President Yeltsin to make continuous modifications and explore new avenues, the results of which were partly systemized with the adoption of the "Theses of the Foreign and Defence policy Council of the Russian Federation" in mid-1995⁷⁹. These, too, were not of a binding character. They were, however, the work of a large number of well-known experts and politicians who were in subsequent years to exert direct or indirect influence on the shape of Russia's foreign and

argumentations as exerted by Poland and Belarus, are not commensurate with respect to neither the quality, nor quantity.

⁷⁶ Lopata R., Žalys V. In Search of Geopolitical Code. Op. cit. - P. 14.

^{**}In a very likely meaning and intention was the discussed concept used within the foreign policy of the caiserist, Weimar, and Hitlerist Germany. We have in mind the "Randstaaten" concept. For more see:- Lopata R. Lietuvos valstybingumo klausimas. 1914-1918. - Vilnius, 1996. - P.

⁷⁷ Baev P. Russia's Departure from Empire: Self-Assertiveness and a New Retreat in Tunander O., Baev P., Einagel V.I. Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe. Security, Territory and Identity. - London: Sage Publications. - P. 181.

⁷⁸ Dawisha K. Russian Foreign Policy in the Near Abroad and Beyond // Current History. - October 1996. - P. 330-334.

⁷⁹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. - June 21, 1995.

defense policy. Some sort of a fresh interest in order to define the priorities of Russia's security and foreign policy emerged in 1996 during the presidential election. The country's leaders have moved clearly to mark out the Near Abroad as their "national security zone" which needs Moscow's "active protection of the rights and interests of fellow-countrymen"⁸⁰.

Provided that we talk about the Baltic Near Abroad, we must stress that in Moscow's opinion the active protection of the rights and interests of fellow-countrymen had to be devoted chiefly to Estonia and Latvia. Moreover, Lithuania, on its turn has been usually discerned from the other Baltic States as a state "which contrives the resolvment of the problems which preoccupy Moscow, and first of all the problem of national minorities"⁸¹. A tendency to differentiate the Baltic States into two categories: "bad guys" (Latvia, Estonia) and "good guys" (Lithuania), has remained until now. Thus, was it stressed explicitly by Primakov on his official visit to Vilnius, June 13th, 1998: "This very moment, it is particularly opportune to develop relations with Lithuania. The border agreement, which soon will be ratified by the State Duma, is signed, benevolent conditions for the trusted economic cooperation introduced. We are handling a differentiated policy which best corresponds to the relations of Lithuania and our country"⁸².

Here below, it is essential to center on the above mentioned border agreement. The Treaty, which was signed in Moscow Summit on 24th of October, 1997, may now be treated as a herald to a new stage in the Lithuanian-Russian relations. Provided that in the period from 1992 to 1995 Lithuanians managed to normalize relations with Poland and Byelorussia, Russia, in essence, has not attempted to strain the issue concerning the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in Lithuania. Otherwise, having applied more geostrategic than political arguments, Moscow has endowed much more concern in suspending Lithuania's attempts to join the Trans-Atlantic structures. At the same time, we could observe Russia's attempts to inveigle Lithuania into its security space through

⁸⁰ Dawisha K. Russian Foreign Policy in the Near Abroad and Beyond in Current History. - October 1996. - P. 331.

⁸¹ .Indeed, the very mentioning of NATO affected Y. Primakov negatively. The interview of the first secretary of Russia's embassy in Lithuania, Boris Kirilov given to *Lietuvos Rytas*. – June 15, 1998.

⁸² Indeed, the very mentioning of the NATO affected Y. Primakov negatively // *Lietuvos rytas*. – June 15, 1998.

the bilateral relationships in two spheres: the political and economic. These attempts were wretched by the fact that Boris Yeltsin suggested that the security guarantees be allotted to Lithuania at the day of the signing of the border agreement. On the other hand, if we talk about the new stage in the relations of Russia and Lithuania, we should rivet our attention to one more proviso, namely the US-Baltic Charter, which was signed in Washington in January 16, 1998.

Russia particularly was unhappy, because it is pretty sure that the proposals which had been made by the President Jeltsin are much better than the Charter. Americans understood at the very early stage and Moscow did neglect the fact that the Baltic States need the moral help in order to become integral part of the Western world⁸³. At the same time the Charter, although stress the importance of good relations with Russia, does not mention Russia's proposals on the Baltic security. Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Lithuania Konstantin Mozel noticed this⁸⁴. He urged Russia to pay more attention towards the Baltic States because until the last moment it dealt more with the Central Europe. Remarks made by the Ambassador would be right to the point if they would be made at least one year ago. But since February 1997 Russia put forward so many proposals towards Lithuania and other Baltic states that such critical remarks made by Mozel look a little bit outdated. All these proposals reflected the national interests in the Baltic region.

Russian deputy Foreign Minister A. Avdejev recognized that Russia made a whole range of proposals due to minimize concerns of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in security matters⁸⁵. Looking from this point of view we could argue that when security proposals were put forward both Russia and United States were guided by the same wish to minimize security concerns in the Baltic region. At the same time we have to stress that while US urged Baltic cooperation with Russia the latter did not mention in her proposals

⁸³ *Izvestija*. - January 15, 1998.

⁸⁴ Radio Station "Free Europe", January 23, 1998.

⁸⁵ *Rossijskie Vesti*. - February 18, 1998.

US or other NATO countries interest in this region. All security problems Russia would be willing to solve on bilateral basis or in the framework of the OSCE⁸⁶.

It was the first official document of Russia which defined national interests of Russia in Lithuania and other Baltic states following their regained independence. It is interesting enough that Avdejev did not recall this concept in his interview. He spoke about the new Russian foreign policy line towards the Baltic states since another package of proposals were put forward at the second part of 1997⁸⁷. Long Term Concept also stress the importance of the neutrality as a security model for the Baltic states, situation of the Russian speaking minorities and geopolitical position of these countries as a important connection between the Russian economy with the Western and Northern Europe⁸⁸.

In response to the announcement of this foreign policy concept leaders of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia made clear that they do not see any reason why they should change the main direction of the foreign policy, i.e. to seek NATO's membership. Russia again asked the Baltic states not to try to join any military alliances, advised them to accept the status of neutrality and promised to give security guarantees which could be put in the bilateral treaties between Russia and each of the Baltic states (September-October, 1997). The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry made a clear statement that unilateral security guarantees or regional security alliances proposed by Russia cannot guarantee security of Europe including Lithuania⁸⁹.

Russian politicians and political analysts today recognize that Russia made a diplomatic mistake by suggesting security guarantees to the Baltic states⁹⁰. Instead of minimizing security concerns of Vilnius, Riga and Tallin it just created additional ones. Top officials from the Russian Foreign Ministry also recognized the mistake therefore during visit of the President Yeltsin to Stockholm additional proposals were put forward. Russia announced that it is ready to reduce her military forces in the region by 40 % and explained that the previous Russian proposals were misunderstood. Moscow did not

⁸⁶ Long Term Concept of the Russian federation in the Baltic region // *Dipkurjer*. - February 1997. - No. 3. - P. 12-21.

⁸⁷ *Rossijskije Vesti*. - February 18, 1998.

⁸⁸ Long Term Concept of the Russian federation in the Baltic region. - P. 13.

⁸⁹ *Lietuvos Rytas*. - October 31, 1997.

⁹⁰ *Vlast v rossiji*. - November 1997. - No. 48. - P. 14.

suggest only unilateral security guarantees but it is ready to participate in the multilateral security arrangements⁹¹. All above-mentioned proposals contain opposition of Russia against Baltic membership in NATO. Starting with Long Term Concept and finishing with the latest Russian proposals all of them pushed to the second place the Russians interests towards the Russian speaking minorities especially in Latvia and Estonia. The third place in the hierarchy of Russia national interests in this region is devoted to the improvement of the Russian entrepreneur's position. By the way Primakov named another interest of Russia which generally speaking includes all categories of national interest mentioned above. These are political-moral interests having in mind that Russia left the Baltic countries leaving everything behind. According to Primakov it would be very difficult to explain to the Russian people that everything they created in these countries would serve to the interests of the foreign armies⁹².

It seems that Russia in order to achieve the main goal - neutrality of the Baltic states - is ready to compromise on other two. Until the latest events in Latvia, in April 1998, Russia was not willing to use any pressure in order to achieve desired result. All Russian proposals stressed the position of good will and wish to better cooperation and mutual understanding with the Baltic states. The Russian position towards Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had been noticed from the positive side by political analysts not only from Russia but from the West as well. They wrote about warming up relations between Russia and the Baltic countries pointed out to the lower level of critical remarks regarding the Russian speaking minorities⁹³.

It is clear that Russia developed her initiatives when it realized that the Baltic states might escape her zone of influence. Good will policy had to show that because there is no threat from the Russian side to the Baltic states therefore there is no need to talk about Baltic membership in NATO. Despite all diplomatic mistakes Russia also made several gains. Before the NATO summit in Madrid Russia succeeded to persuade NATO countries do not include any of the Baltic states into the first round of NATO

⁹¹ Principialnoje Napravlenije Gosudarstvennoj Politiki // Vestnik voennoj informaciji. - March 1998. - No. 3.

⁹² Primakov J. Ja Chuvstvuju Doverije Prezidenta // Nezavisimaja Gazeta. - December 30, 1997.

⁹³ *The Financial Times*, - January 17, 1998.

enlargement. Secondly, before the US-Baltic Charter has been signed Washington made clear that the Baltic countries are not regarded as serious candidates also for the second tour of NATO enlargement.

However, when Russia read the text of the Charter and when signing countries put forwards their comments regarding the importance of this document Russia suddenly realized that her victory over the Baltic efforts to join NATO might be short-lived. Russian foreign policy based on good will towards her neighbors is no less strong argument than a threat to review relations with NATO. In such conditions the Baltic states and their supporters have more difficulties to defend their arguments about the need to include the Baltic states into the Alliance at the earliest stage. Vilnius, Riga and Tallin also were facing difficult dilemma: how to respond to unacceptable Russian proposals regarding the security in the Baltic region and not to offend Russia. On the other hand it is very important for the Baltic states to show their willingness to cooperate further on with Russia as it was also stated in Washington when US-Baltic Charter had been signed.

It is quite possible that Russia itself will let the Baltic states escape from not easy decision. Suddenly strong Moscow's reaction to the events in Riga threat to use economical sanctions against this country due to force Latvia to change its treatment of the Russian speaking minority could distort the image of the peaceful Russia. Russia decided to use towards the Baltic states her famous policy "divide et impera". However, it seems that this weapon turns back on Russia. Lithuania and Estonia passed serious statements of support to Latvia. Russia might gain some victory in Latvia by forcing politicians in this country to make changes to their laws and improving the Russian speaking minority situation in Latvia. However, Moscow's losses in all three Baltic states are much higher than gains. Russia again showed her threatening face not only to the Baltic but to other countries in Europe as well. We could expect that following this diplomatic action Moscow will renew to show a good will policy towards her neighbors as Primakov's visit to Lithuania demonstrates. On the other hand it is quite possible that the last actions destroyed all positive results of the diplomatic activity which lasted more than one year in order to restore never strong confidence in good will of Russia.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The project attempted to elaborate and analyze the national question in Lithuania from the re-establishment of independence in order to perceive the potential of the society and the state, namely, to find democratic scenarios for the future development of inter-ethnic relations in this country. Several major areas were examined, i.e. institutional-legal aspects of minority rights, the possibilities of the political and economic integration, and the influence of the external factors on the national minorities in Lithuania.

2. First of all, it is necessary to stress that the domination of the ideology of ethnonationalism and peculiarities of authoritarian political system which dominated during the past seventy years diminished the possibilities of political integration of national minorities in Lithuania. The national question became especially important during *perestroika* era and the first years of post-Soviet politics.

3. It is well known that there is a difference between minority rights *de iure* and *de facto*. However, neither domestic jurisdictional bodies nor international observers have ever marked any significant discrepancies between the legal status of national minorities and their factual conditions in Lithuania. Although the treatment of national minorities in some Baltic States has been a loud issue in post-Soviet politics, the situation in Lithuania never was seen as problematic. This was due *inter alia* to liberal citizenship laws granting Lithuanian citizenship even to those persons who settled in Lithuania during the Soviet occupation. Here, the legislation on national minorities is based on international standards, which was reflected in the documents of the Council of Europe.

4. Lithuanian laws do not provide for a definition of the national minority, but they are directed towards the groups of citizens that aim to protect and promote their distinct language, religion, culture and traditions. The Constitution states that a person's race, nationality, language and religion shall not cause any restrictions of the rights of the individual, neither shall they grant any privileges. There is very limited constitutional

jurisprudence on minority-related issues, however no statutory violations of minority rights were observed.

5. Deviations from the international standards could be explained by practical (in)capabilities of state agencies to secure necessary funds for supporting ethnic communities. However, legally, minorities enjoy all the cultural, linguistic, religious and other rights known to the European Convention on Human Rights.

6. Then in Lithuania each ethnicity has the chance to build its own associations and these organizations have an opportunity for influence in the political system. As the following analysis demonstrates Lithuania strongly follows an inclusionary strategy. This strategy goes from allowing private organization of minority cultural and educational life to various consociational policies (financial support of communal organizations from government, official bilingualism at the local level). There are all conditions that Lithuania could well become a consolidated multinational democracy.

7. Despite the relatively backwardness of the East Lithuanian districts where national minorities composed the majority, the privatization process became one of the factors of identity and loyalty multiplication factors. Economic reform enhances inter-ethnic cooperation in Lithuania. However, the social development of the East Lithuanian districts must become a priority direction of the Government of Lithuania. Such a decision allows to expect the financial support of different funds and international organizations - the establishment of "euro-regions" in the frontier districts in compliance with the PHARE and other programs of the European Union.

8. The formation and development of the political organizations and parties representing the ethnic minorities have been determined by the legacy of politics in the former Soviet Union toward ethnic minorities as well as by the peculiarities of processes streaming for Independence and the restoration of the statehood of Lithuania. However, different historical background and social-cultural traditions of nationalities have discriminated them along political self-organization, participation and representation in the governmental bodies of Lithuania.

9. Poles more than any other minorities identify themselves with their ethnic group, while such identification is rather weak with Russians and small nationalities in

Lithuania. They are most politically organized ethnic group as well as best represented in the central and local bodies. In spite of Lithuanian Polish Electoral Action recently has only three members in the Seimas, it still is treated as most prominent and strongest political force among the non-Lithuanian population. However, that is the regional party, supported by Poles with strong representation in the main of so-called "Polish districts": Vilnius, Vilnius- Šalčininkai, Trakai and Naujoji Vilnia electoral districts. On the other hand, the Polish minority is most politically passive and alienated among non-Lithuanians.

10. Lithuanian Russian Union there is the weakest political organization failed to gain support of the rusophnes population. His future perspective is very difficult to predict because it entered political area a few years ago, does not manage to form his electorate and, really, has a little chances to mobilize wider support among the population. The Lithuanian Alliance of Citizens has obtained better position. However, in spite of the leaders of the Alliance proclaim equal rights for ethnic minorities, they obviously are representatives of business elite of non-Lithuanian citizens.

11. Resuming the growing organizational capacities of ethnic minorities is only one side of their political integration. Participation and political activity of these group are lowest over Lithuania and particularly in Poles populated regions .

12. The "external factors", which can be called the Russian, the Polish, and the Byelorussian factors, tried to "adjust" the process of the integration of the national minorities of Lithuania. During the eight-year-independence period, the role of these aforementioned factors was not equivalent: three countries - USSR (Russia), Poland and the Belarus SSR – provided their initial appeal to the national question in Lithuania, had tried to sway the territorial and national-civil integrality of Lithuania the period from to 1992; later on it was only Russia to remain important.

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