

Brazauskas in Power: An Assessment

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The victory of Lithuania's Democratic Labor Party (LDDP) in the parliamentary elections of October and November 1992 was lamented by many in the West as the return of the former Communists to power in a country that had played a major role in the dismantling of the Soviet Union. If just a few years ago Lithuania had been the trailblazer in the struggle for independence and democracy, now it seemed to be the leader in efforts to reverse the trends that began in 1988.

But to those familiar with the recent history of Lithuania, the election results had no such ominous implications. They merely reflected the growing sophistication of the voters and their reliance on democratic institutions to settle political differences and to redirect as well as to reaffirm economic, social and political reforms. It was the case of a young democracy coming into its own. As in other former republics of the Soviet Union, democratization in Lithuania had to overcome numerous obstacles—the most visible ones being the absence of democratic political culture, relentless pressure from Moscow and the resultant siege-like atmosphere, and the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions. One of the important forces that helped to preserve fledgling democratic institutions was the Communist Party of Lithuania (Lietuvos Komunistų Partija—LKP) and its successor, Lithuania's Democratic Labor Party. Without their early commitment, the struggle for democracy and independence in Lithuania would have been much more difficult. The meaning of the 1992 elections, therefore, can only be fully evaluated and understood in the context of the party's role in promoting change, a role that originated six years ago.

The LKP and the Struggle for Independence

In the summer of 1988, the national reawakening began to manifest itself in a surge of massive meetings and demonstrations demanding reforms and recognition of Lithuania's national identity. When this occurred, the leadership of the LKP was completely unprepared to respond to the challenge. As in the past, it attempted to look to Moscow for guidance, but this time the Center itself did not speak with one voice.¹ Another problem confronting the party was the growing internal split between the hardliners, or defenders of the status quo, and the reformers, many of whom played a major role in the establishment of Sajūdis. This mass nationalist movement was initially committed to change within the Soviet system but subsequently opted for statehood. Of the thirty-six activists who founded Sajūdis, a significant number belonged to the LKP. Few of these Communists held important positions in the party, but many were prominent professionals (most came from academia and the so-called creative professions: writers, actors, artists, musicians). They were able to collectively exercise influence well beyond their numbers or

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official status in the organization. They wanted to reform the LKP and the system, and felt that Sajūdis was the necessary vehicle to achieve both objectives. Thus, party leaders, who were for the most part hardliners, found themselves pressured from inside as well as outside—and often by the same people. In September, an unauthorized demonstration to denounce the secret Soviet-Nazi protocol concerning Lithuania took place. They felt that things were beginning to get out of hand and ordered riot police to disperse the demonstrators. The hardliners completely misjudged the popular reaction, which turned out to be so overwhelmingly negative that in less than a month, the party had new first and second secretaries.

In the past, Moscow always had a lot to say about who the first secretary would be. This time the leader was elected by the Central Committee in Vilnius, and the men in the Kremlin had little choice but to go along. Even more precedent-breaking was the simultaneous dismissal of the second secretary. Traditionally, this post was held by a non-Lithuanian entrusted by Moscow to keep an eye on the republic's party. His replacement was a local Russian, loyal to the first secretary and a supporter of reforms.

The appointment of Algirdas Brazauskas as first secretary marked the start of a new era in the LKP's history. Nothing in this technocrat's rather conventional biography hinted at any anti-Center predispositions. Only in 1988 had Brazauskas by circumstance as well as personal choice become the leader of the party's reform wing. One such circumstance was his role as the LKP's unofficial contact with Sajūdis. There is little doubt that Brazauskas was moved by the popular euphoria and nationalist sentiments at the movement's mass rallies, where he often spoke.² As the only high-ranking party official in attendance, he had to explain and defend the LKP's policy. In the process, Brazauskas emerged as a dedicated but sober reformer who was prepared to move the party well beyond the positions of its former leadership. In the fall of 1988 his views on the need for reform did not substantially differ from those of many Sajūdis activists. The differences were mostly in temperament and rhetoric. It is not surprising, therefore, that Brazauskas was clearly Sajūdis' choice for first secretary.

If Brazauskas had his way, he most likely would have chosen a gradual and cautious road to reform. For the new leader and his supporters within the LKP, the realization of the basic citizen rights such as freedom of expression and worship, guaranteed but ignored in the various constitutions of the Soviet Union, the new emphasis on the republic's national character, and the loosening of its economic ties with the Center were the most important immediate goals. They did not seem to generate strong opposition in the Kremlin, at least as far as the pro-perestroika wing of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was concerned. To Moscow what was much more objectionable were the growing demands for the legalization of political pluralism and the granting of "sovereignty" to the LKP and Lithuania.³

Initially, the first secretary appeared to accede to the Center's wishes and for the time being refused to confront the two issues. His reluctance to follow Estonia in demanding a new relationship with Moscow, whereby the Union's laws could be implemented only with the approval of the republic's government, was a good case in point.⁴ It did not take long, however, for Brazauskas to realize that his options were limited. In the March 1989 elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, the

LKP was badly defeated by Sajūdis-endorsed candidates who stressed the issue of national self-determination. The election results were confirmed by a subsequent poll which showed a 68 percent to 22 percent advantage for the nationalist movement.⁵ Consequently, it became obvious that the party's political fortunes would not improve unless a stronger commitment was made to democracy and statehood, and that the two objectives could not be realized if the LKP remained a subdivision of the CPSU.

These considerations undoubtedly had a lot to do with the party's subsequent actions. Among the more important were the adoption of constitutional amendments establishing the republic's sovereignty, the passing of laws providing for economic self-sufficiency, and the repudiation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact's secret protocols and the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union.⁶ The cumulative effect of these decisions by the Supreme Council of Lithuania seemed to amount to a final step before formal secession. Then, on December 7, the same body abolished the LKP's monopoly of political power and legalized a multi-party system in which no group could claim special privileges.

There is little doubt that the actions of the old legislature, still dominated by the LKP, were orchestrated by Brazauskas. He sensed the mood of the nation and was determined to preempt Sajūdis' nationalist agenda by offering a "responsible" road to democracy and independence.

In October the LKP's leadership, despite Moscow's advice to the contrary, decided to convene a special congress in order to deal with LKP-CPSU relations and other outstanding issues. The delegates who met in Vilnius on December 19 were very different from those of the previous party congresses. They were relatively young, highly educated, non-working class, democratically elected, first-time participants.⁷ Most of them supported democratic reforms and the restructuring of the party.⁸ Thus, it was hardly surprising when the congress overwhelmingly proclaimed the LKP's "self-sufficiency,"⁹ adopted a statute mandating organizational democracy, and approved an essentially social democratic program. Finally, in a burst of nationalist euphoria the delegates by a large majority (855 to 160) endorsed a resolution calling for the restoration of Lithuania's statehood.¹⁰

Officially, the congress did not create an independent Lithuanian Communist party. The LKP was now "self-sufficient" but still possessed some undefined ties with the former parent organization. The future relationship between the two parties depended on the CPSU's ability to transform itself into a truly democratic organization, committed to cooperation with the republican parties as equal partners. However, despite this official stance the LKP—with its own program, statutes, and commitment to statehood—could no longer be realistically regarded as part of the old organization, neither legally, politically or psychologically. This view was shared by Mikhail Gorbachev as well as some 135 delegates who walked out of the congress and formed a splinter Communist party loyal to Moscow.¹¹ Moreover, most observers agreed that there was a very small chance that the CPSU would quickly reform itself along the lines suggested by the congress.

Up to this point the LKP's contribution to the development of democracy in Lithuania was threefold. As the ruling party it permitted and in some cases encouraged the development of political pluralism, and transformed itself into a

democratic and independent organization. The endorsement of statehood was a decision that not only responded to the wishes of most Lithuanians but also reinforced the resolve to pursue democratic reforms in the republic.

The LKP Becomes the LDDP

The LKP's support of democracy and independence, however, did not save it from another electoral defeat at the hands of Sajūdis in February and March 1990. The political past continued to be a major obstacle to the party's success at the polls. Obviously, more needed to be done to make the LKP competitive. This was one of the reasons for the second special congress in as many years. Another reason was the rapidly changing membership. Since 1988 many members had left the LKP because it no longer could enhance their careers or offer the prestige and influence of a ruling party. Others had departed because they could not accept programmatic and organizational changes. Thus, by the time of the second congress, membership was down from some 200,000 in 1988 to slightly over 60,000.¹² The decline continued after the congress, and in 1992 settled at about 15,000.¹³ Of this number only six percent or so were former members of the unreconstructed LKP. Their percentage, however, was substantially higher among the LDDP's leaders.

Whereas during the 1989 meeting the focus had been on self-sufficiency, now the

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themes of democracy and social justice predominated. The congress also dealt more extensively with the LKP's history, repudiating past crimes and mistakes. The party's role in the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union, the deportations of its citizens, brutal collectivization drives, persecu-

tion of the church, and other crimes were specifically mentioned and denounced.¹⁴ In essence, however, this congress only built on the foundations of change laid down a year earlier. As for the current issues, it called for a slower privatization process and more realistic policies toward the Soviet Union. The congress also criticized right-wing factions in the Supreme Council for their allegedly undemocratic behavior and madcap rush to reconstruct the society without concern for social consequences. Finally, the LKP replaced the old organizational structure and changed its name to Lithuania's Democratic Labor Party. Brazauskas was elected chairman of the new party's national council.

The LDDP's Election Victories

In January 1991 the coalition Cabinet of Kazimiera Prunskienė was replaced with one that more accurately reflected the views of the majority in Parliament. Moreover, the new Cabinet had no LDDP representatives. The party now became a major force in the opposition to the right-of-center government led by Vytautas Landsbergis, chairman of Lithuania's Supreme Council and president of Sajūdis; and Gediminas Vagnorius, the new prime minister.

In Landsbergis the government had a leader who played a major role in the struggle for independence. He refused to change course despite enormous pressures

from within and from outside the republic. Landsbergis' perseverance paid off not only for his country but also for other Soviet republics. The spectacle of Lithuania's successful defiance of the Kremlin despite enormous odds could not help but influence other nations of the Soviet Union. Even his critics concede that Landsbergis was the right man at the right time for Lithuania.¹⁵ However, once the reestablishment of independence was recognized by the international community, Landsbergis, and the coalition of right-wing parties and movements supporting him (including Sajūdis which after the 1990 parliamentary elections acquired a distinctly right-wing orientation), proved to be considerably less effective in implementing the transition from Soviet-style communism to market-oriented economy.

The attempts at quick and radical decollectivization of agriculture produced a chaotic situation in which both the production and the standard of living significantly declined. Things were not much better in the industrial sector. Deprived of easy access to the former Soviet Union's markets and raw materials, and unable to compensate this loss with Western investments, markets and economic aid, production inevitably decreased. Most dramatic and politically damaging, however, were the shortages of fuel during the fall and winter of 1992-93, forcing the government to ration hot water and reduce temperatures in most urban dwellings to about 55 F. One view at that time was that Landsbergis-Vagnorius' rigid policies toward Russia were responsible for the underheated rooms; another—that Moscow chose to deprive Lithuania of needed fuels in order to embarrass an unfriendly government.

In the political sphere, the government's desovietization often led to emotional charges and countercharges about actual or imagined ties with the KGB. The Right's efforts to enact a law temporarily banning former LKP officials from service in the present government backfired. After fifty years of Soviet rule there were more than a few people who fit this category and they naturally felt threatened. More importantly, however, many others who would not have been affected by the law regarded it as the Right's ploy to prolong its stay in power.

Another problem was the rapidly rising crime wave. This issue also affected the privatization drive as it was widely rumored that organized crime, the "mafia," was acquiring privatized property through threats and violence. Although corruption was not a major factor in the campaign, the resignation of several high-ranking officials over questionable financial transactions also helped to reinforce the view that the government was soft on crime because its own house was not entirely clean.

In foreign policy the record of the Landsbergis-Vagnorius government was mixed. The most significant achievements were the recognition of Lithuania's independence by Russia even before the failed August coup and Moscow's promise to withdraw Russian troops by the end of August 1993. However, successes in politics were not matched in economics. Despite all the talk of turning from East to West, the government failed to attract even moderate Western interest in Lithuania's economy. The scandals and delays involving the introduction of new currency and the inability to proceed with the building of the oil importation terminal, two symbolic as well as real manifestations of Lithuania's economic independence from Russia, reflected the government's ineffectiveness in this area.

Consequently, it is hardly surprising that during the 1992 parliamentary election

campaign the LDDP blamed the Right for the deteriorating economic conditions, attacked its confrontational policies toward Russia, and criticized the stoking of fires on the issue of retribution to Soviet Lithuania's officials. It promised to slow down privatization, especially in agriculture, establish normal relations with Russia and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), end the "witch hunts" associated with desovietization and, above all, inject more nonideological, pragmatic expertise in the management of the nation's affairs. The party also reaffirmed its commitment to independence, democracy and reform.

Underlying all issues, however, was the question of trust. Could the former LKP be handed the power without risking a return to the old system? Brazauskas and his cohorts were frequently confronted by the voters on their views concerning Lithuania's relations with the CIS. Despite all the problems besetting the young democracy, the preservation of independence was still a major concern to the people. Once the party convinced the voters that it was a safe and credible alternative, they decided to throw the rascals out. Thus, the election results represented not a repudiation of independence, democracy or even a market economy. Voters made a difficult decision to remove from power individuals to whom only one year earlier they had expressed gratitude for successfully leading the struggle for national liberation. It was a verdict that in some respects resembled the British voters' action to oust Winston Churchill and the Conservatives immediately after the great victory in Europe.

The results of the election shocked the voters, the pollsters and even the LDDP. Since the balloting consisted of two rounds (in single-member districts run-offs took place where no candidate received 50 percent of the vote), there was much speculation whether in the second round the voters would confirm the unexpected victory or would return to the Right and center parties, having

sent them a message. The second round was as decisive for the LDDP as the first one, suggesting that the election was clearly not about messages but a change of government. In all, the party received 44 percent of the vote and elected 78 (out of 141) members of Parliament.¹⁶

The presidential election held in February 1993 once more confirmed the LDDP's success at the polls. There were only two presidential candidates, Brazauskas and Stasys Lozoraitis, Lithuania's ambassador to the United States. Brazauskas won this contest by receiving 60 to Lozoraitis' slightly less than 40 percent of the vote. The LDDP leader has always been more popular than his party, but in this instance he was also helped by the fact that Lozoraitis had not resided in Lithuania since the 1930s. More important, however, was the voters' desire to complete the process of transferring power to the same party in both branches so that a fractured and dissension-ridden government could be replaced by a more unified one.

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Brazauskas and the LDDP in Power

In the beginning, the LDDP showed considerable reluctance to exercise power alone and assume full responsibility over the government. Immediately after the parliamentary elections it proposed a coalition cabinet with other parties but was quickly and decisively rebuffed by the Right. A separate attempt was made to involve centrist parties and leaders in executive and legislative offices. Although it produced only mixed results, the Cabinet's final version had the look of a nonpartisan body in which LDDP members were in the minority. In this context a minor controversy involving the new prime minister, Adolfas Šleivičius, was also instructive. In order to make a gesture towards national unity and nonpartisanship, he decided to relinquish his newly acquired post as the LDDP's leader.¹⁷ The prime minister changed his mind only when it appeared clear that the public did not want any dilution of the party's governmental responsibility.

Caution soon became the watchword for the president, the Cabinet and the new majority faction in the Parliament. Privatization was slowed, and the weekly unmasking of supposed agents of the KGB stopped. In agriculture new life was injected into the remaining collective farms under a changed name and orientation toward profit. The promised extension of the social safety net essentially took the form of increases in salaries, wages, unemployment compensation, and pensions with every successive inflationary spiral.

Despite numerous programmatic statements that the LDDP represented employees' interests, its initial economic policy could not be described as pro-labor or anti-business. The new Cabinet, headed by a former LKP official and post-Soviet businessman, has promoted selected private entrepreneurs and enterprises. In a country where the government's role in the economy is still decisive, such promotion is not insignificant. Moreover, neither the legislature nor the executive has been especially partial to industrial unions, professional associations, or agricultural workers. What strikes many observers is that the new government does not seem to have a plan for reversing the economic slide. Its approach to the solution of problems is strictly ad hoc.

In foreign policy, too, the changes were less dramatic than anticipated. Expansion of political and economic integration with the West did not slow down; if anything, it picked up speed. Lithuania joined the Council of Europe and was accepted as an associate member of NATO. The president's and prime minister's foreign travels during the first year took them to numerous Western states in search of foreign investment. Their efforts, however, were only moderately successful, and at the end of 1993 Lithuania still lagged behind Estonia and Latvia in economic relations with the West.

The feared thrust toward the East never materialized. Establishment of diplomatic relations with several CIS countries, including Ukraine and Belarus, was achieved, but the long-awaited comprehensive treaty with Russia has been hampered by Lithuania's insistence on reparations. Economic contacts between the government and individual Russian enterprises have improved, especially in the fuel-supply sphere, but on the whole they remain unpredictable, uneven and frequently a source of disruption for the Lithuanian economy.

Just before the troop withdrawal deadline, Moscow decided to extract whatever it could from the Brazauskas-Šležičius government by threatening the postponement

of the withdrawal unless certain conditions, including abandonment of the reparations demand, were met. A somewhat belated firm stand by the president and pressure from the West induced the Yeltsin government to back off, and the troops left in accordance with the original deadline.

After the impressive showing of the nationalists and Communists in Russia's parliamentary elections, the relations between Lithuania and Russia took a turn for the worse. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev's suggestion, later partially disavowed, that the Baltic states were within Russia's sphere of influence was only one example of Moscow's new attitude toward the former republics. These developments seemed to have disabused Lithuania's leaders of whatever notions they may have had about prospects for improving relations with Russia by abandoning so-called confrontational policies. Currently, both sides are involved in politically hazardous negotiations concerning Russian transit rights to Kaliningrad.

During the first months in government, the LDDP made a number of decisions that proved to be counterproductive. The first and the most controversial was the president's firing of the ambassador in Washington without first finding a candidate to replace him. It also did not help matters that the ambassador had been Brazauskas' only opponent in the presidential race and had a wide and loyal following among Lithuanian-Americans. The Right made the most of the fuss and to some extent succeeded in tarnishing the president's and his party's carefully cultivated image of nonpartisanship and political reconciliation. The fact that this controversy dominated the news during most of the spring seemed to reflect the unreality of politics in post-Soviet Lithuania. Apparently, if people no longer believe that government and politics matter, relatively insignificant issues such as the firing (actually, reassignment to Rome) of an ambassador can easily be blown out of all proportion—and for a time divert the nation's attention from truly important problems.

Another ill-advised move by the LDDP was its attempt to dismiss the city council of Vilnius. Although the new constitution provided for such a dismissal in exceptional cases, this thinly disguised effort by the Parliament's majority faction to settle the score with its political opponents was so ill-received by the public that Brazauskas was forced to veto the measure initiated and supported by his own party.¹⁸ And the fact that previous governments had engaged in similar moves was of little help to the party that had made democracy its trademark.

Have there been any major achievements by the LDDP government? Yes, and it does not lessen their significance that some of them had to do with old problems and issues. For example, after much inaction by the preceding cabinets, the new government finally introduced a national currency, settled on the building site for an oil importation terminal, and took the first significant steps in the fight against organized crime.

On a more general level, as a party that originated in the old system, the LDDP has performed an important function of political socialization. Although most residents of Lithuania supported independence, some did not, and they were especially noticeable among the Russian and Polish minorities. The LDDP was perceived by them as representing a more moderate and, therefore, more acceptable version of Lithuanian nationalism. Thus, the party's commitment, in and out of the government, to independence and democracy undoubtedly had a positive impact on

the minorities' attitudes toward the new state and its institutions.

However, the principal issue remains the nation's economy. Despite the LDDP's promises to correct the mistakes of the Landsbergis-Vagnorius government and to institute a more pragmatic approach to the solution of economic problems, by the end of the party's first year in power things have not significantly changed for the better. Industrial and agricultural production continued to fall and unemployment to rise, albeit at a lower rate than during 1991-92. On the other hand, real wages have slightly increased and inflation substantially declined.¹⁹ Consequently, one can characterize the present economic situation as having been stabilized. This, however, appears to be considerably less than what many who voted for the LDDP candidates expected. Conditions in rural Lithuania—the source of the party's strength in the 1992 elections—if anything, have become even worse.

Brazauskas' and Šleževičius' cautious foreign and domestic policies failed to mollify the Right and caused some dissatisfaction within the LDDP's parliamentary faction. The polarization in Lithuanian politics today is as deep as ever. The Right has maintained a

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steady drumbeat of criticism that occasionally seems to border on the irrational. Their letter asking for British MPs' help in stopping Brazauskas' supposed anticonstitutional activities, sent to London during the president's first official visit there, was clearly intended to undermine his credibility at home and abroad. In Parliament the opposition has refused to cooperate with the LDDP on a variety of organizational issues ranging from the election of deputy speakers to the appointment of assistant committee chairpersons. Here the Right has also continued a practice, originated by the Left when it was in opposition, to leave the chamber whenever the majority was about to make a supposedly unconstitutional or unpalatable move.

Landsbergis, now the official leader of the opposition in Parliament, has accused Brazauskas and Šleževičius of “resovietization.” This appears to be a catch-all term covering everything from the alleged sell-out to Moscow on the transit rights to Kaliningrad to the politization of the banking system. It reflects the Right's determination to interpret most policies and programs of the government as a conscious effort to return Lithuania to some unspecified state of affairs with ominous implications. Thus, virtually any negotiations with Moscow have been denounced as a backdoor attempt to make Lithuania a member of the CIS and recent agricultural programs as attempts to reestablish the old Soviet system, or its updated version, within the framework of an independent state.²⁰

Sensing the growing unpopularity of the LDDP, the Right has called for early parliamentary elections. Apparently, preparations for future campaigns have already begun. Sajūdis has been transformed into a civic movement and will continue to promote right-wing causes without, however, fielding candidates for public office. To fill the vacuum created by the “depolitization” of Sajūdis, a new party, Homeland Association/Lithuania's Conservatives (Tevynės Sąjunga/ Lietuvos Konservatoriai—TSLK), was founded under the leadership of Landsbergis and Vagnorius. Since this

organization is an offshoot of Sąjūdis, one must assume that they will closely cooperate in the future. The other major party on the Right is the Christian Democrats (LKDP). In the past the LKDP had been an ally of Sąjūdis and will probably continue to be, although there is some dissatisfaction within the party with Landsbergis' and Vagnorius' domination of the smaller parties and movements in the right-wing coalition.

The lack of economic improvement has produced thunder on the Left. There have been public complaints among some members of the LDDP faction in Parliament that the president and the Cabinet are unduly intimidated by the right-wing opposition and should do more to implement campaign promises. Subsequently, a faction consisting of about a third of the LDDP's parliamentary membership, was formed within the majority faction in order to put pressure on the government.²¹ If the economic situation does not appreciably improve, deeper splits may very well occur within the ruling party.

The reactions of the Right and the Left have reflected the disillusionment of the voters with the LDDP's performance so far. In two special elections held to fill the seat left vacant when Brazauskas became president, the party's candidates received only 18 and 11 percent of the vote, respectively.²² The drop from 56 percent, Brazauskas' vote total in the 1992 election, can be in part explained by the president's personal popularity in his home district. Still, the fact that fewer than 50 percent of the eligible voters bothered to come to the polls in both special elections suggests that many erstwhile supporters are entirely fed up with politics and did not see much difference between the parties. The message to the LDDP was clear: If things continue to slide, its political future would be grim indeed.

Prospects for the Future

President Brazauskas' governing style is low-key and nonconfrontational. Although in the supercharged political climate of Lithuania such an approach is not without merit, at times it has created an image of an indecisive and even ill-informed leader of the country. For example, the president's nonconfrontational approach has encouraged Russia to raise new demands in the treaty negotiations, and only pressure from the Right and center appears to have produced his eventual decision not to make concessions. Application for membership in NATO also seems to have been influenced by the opposition's demands, because initially the president was cool to the idea of integration into the Western military alliance.²³ Criticism from the Left within the LDDP has also had an impact on the president and other government leaders. Now the Cabinet is clearly more partisan, and this trend is reflected in numerous appointments to the lower echelons of the government. The pressures from the party's Left had probably something to do with the introduction of the controversial state-of-emergency bill, ostensibly intended to fight crime but repeatedly attacked by the Right as a step toward party dictatorship.

In January a presidential veto of the agricultural bill was overridden with the help of LDDP votes. It was still another indication that the party, contrary to the claims of its critics, is not a monolith of the old LKP model. Its parliamentary majority has been increasingly uneasy about the LDDP's prospects in future elections. This does not necessarily mean that there will be a turn to the left, although this is always a

possibility. A more likely result of what some party officials see as an unending government impasse would be a replacement of the Šleževičius Cabinet.

In order to enhance its electoral prospects, the Right needs to develop a credible alternative to the LDDP. Criticism without a positive program to improve the economic and social conditions is not likely to attract many voters beyond those already committed to the cause. In this context, it is important to note that election results since 1990 show about one-third of the electorate consistently leaning toward the Right, another one-third toward the Left, and the final one-third up for grabs by either side.

Moreover, the opposition needs to dissociate itself once and for all from all fringe elements who want to take the law into their own hands. A case in point was a mutiny by a small group of officers and enlisted men in the volunteers' units, created during the struggle for independence and currently under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense. Although all parties denounced the mutiny as unconstitutional, some leaders of the Right while deploring the mutineers' tactics endorsed their provocative demands directed at the Communist (read LDDP) government in Vilnius.²⁴

If there were a viable political center in Lithuania today, it would matter less what happened on the Left or on the Right. But instead of one or two large parties, there are here at least half a dozen small ones that are fiercely independent and very protective of their interests. Only one of them, the Social Democrats, was able to surmount the four-percent minimum requirement in parliamentary elections. And programmatically it is the least typical of the political center. The leaders of the two liberal parties barely talk to each other and refuse to recognize the other as being "liberal" at all. The remaining center parties are too small to have any possible impact.

It is a pity that the center has not been able to unite, at least for electoral purposes, and present the voters, dissatisfied with the Right's and the Left's record in government, with a third alternative. At present it appears that for the foreseeable future the choice will continue to be between the LDDP and the right-wing coalition.

Among the major unresolved issues in Lithuania are normalization of relations with Poland, attraction of larger Western investments and cleaning up of the mess in agriculture. The first issue can be resolved if the government forgoes the demand that the treaty normalizing relations between the two neighbors include Poland's admission of aggression against Lithuania in 1920. This move would not be popular with the public but it is necessary in view of the recent events in Russia and because through Poland, Lithuania has the most direct land access to the West.

Western investments can be increased by improving the climate for them in Lithuania. Reductions in taxes, stricter observance of contracts and understandings already made with foreign companies, and elimination of bottlenecks at the customs points are but a few steps that should be immediately undertaken. Likewise, Estonia's and Latvia's relative successes in this area merit serious examination and consideration for possible imitation.

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Alleviation of the distress in agriculture poses the most difficult challenge. The time is already past when previous governments could be blamed for today's problems. Voters of the basically rural Kaišiadorys district have indicated twice that they are disillusioned with the LDDP's performance. The current strike by the farmers is only one symptom of the chaotic conditions that prevail in agriculture.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that after one year in power the LDDP's record turns out to be not as bad as its opponents predicted nor as good as its supporters expected. Promised pragmatism, professionalism and moderation have not improved the daily lives of the people very much. On the other hand, it is clear that the party has not reversed the processes of democratization, socioeconomic reform, and strengthening of statehood. Its achievements so far, although by no means spectacular, suggest a determined effort to continue moving ahead in all three areas.

Notes

¹ Early in 1988, Soviet President Andrei Gromyko travelled to Vilnius to reassure the LKP leadership of Moscow's support but later in the year Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev scolded the same leaders for lack of initiative in implementing perestroika. Alfred E. Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 32, 110-12.

² Algirdas Brazauskas, *Lietuviškos Skyrybos* (Vilnius: Politika, 1992), pp. 11-16.

³ During 1988-89 the term "sovereignty" was sometimes used interchangeably with "independence," thereby causing some confusion. In general, however, "sovereignty" denoted autonomy within the Soviet Union; "independence"—establishment of a Lithuanian state.

⁴ Senn, 246-47.

⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, "The Lithuanian Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1990), p. 35.

⁶ V. S. Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1989), p. 75.

⁷ Of the 1038 delegates almost 900 were participating in a party congress for the first time; 92.5% had a higher education; only 23 were working-class representatives; and while 30 were over age 60, 173 were below 35. "Mandatų Komisijos Pranešimas," *Tiesa*, 13 December 1989, p. 1.

⁸ Two days before the start of the congress, a poll published by the LKP's Social Trends Research Center revealed the delegates' views on the issues under discussion in the party and the republic. A questionnaire was sent to all prospective participants, of whom 803, or about 80%, responded. The respondents preferred Sąjūdis to their own party +38 to +32 on the scale of +100 to -100; slightly less than two-thirds were in favor of a "self-sufficient" LKP, and less than one-third wanted a party totally independent of Moscow. On the issue of a multi-party system, 42% supported the concept unconditionally, 40% endorsed it with some reservations, and 12% accepted it only if the LKP retained its dominant position in the state. A surprising 78% of the respondents felt that party members could hold a variety of views, and 74% were convinced that unlike the previous congresses, this one would not follow a predetermined scenario but would be unpredictable and contentious. "Lietuvos Komunistų Partijos XX Suvažiavimą Pasitinkant," *Tiesa*, 17 December 1989, p. 2.

⁹ The Lithuanian term, used by the LKP, was "savarankiškumas." Literally, it means "with one's own hands." "Self-sufficiency" comes closest in conveying the meaning of this term.

¹⁰ "Lietuvos Komunistų Partijos savarankiškumo deklaracija" and "Lietuvos Komunistų Partijos XX Suvažiavimo nutarimas dėl LKP statuso," *Tiesa*, 21 December 1989, p. 1.

¹¹ M. Gorbaciovas, "Lietuvos Komunistų Partijos XX Suvažiavimo delegatams," *Tiesa*, 22 December 1989, p. 1.

¹² A. Brazauskas, "Svarbiausia Lietuvos Interesai," *Tiesa*, 8 November 1990, p. 2.

¹³ *Tiesa*, 15 September 1992, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Neeilinio Partijos Suvažiavimo Dokumentai* (Vilnius: LDDP Tarybos Sekretoriato Leidinys, 1991), pp. 5-6.

¹⁵ See Anatol Lieven's *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 253, 273.

¹⁶ "Rinkimai po pustrėčių nepriklausomybės metų: Lietuva vėl nepripažysta pustoniu," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 27 October 1992, pp. 1-2. "Lietuva išsirinko Seimą: priekalas ir kūjis pasikeitė vietomis?," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 17 November 1992, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷ According to the new Constitution, approved in a referendum held during the 1992 parliamentary elections, the president of the republic "must suspend his activities in political parties." Thus, Adolfas Šleževičius was elected by the party's conference to replace Brazauskas as the LDDP leader. Not surprisingly, Brazauskas continued to exercise considerable influence in the organization.

¹⁸ Subsequently the law was declared to be in violation of the Constitution by the Constitutional Court of Lithuania.

¹⁹ Information released by Seimas (the parliament of Lithuania), January, 1994.

²⁰ V. Landsbergis, "Lietuvos padėtis nekokia ir grėsminga," *Lietuvos Aidas*, 17 December 1993, pp. 6,11. "Lietuvoje viskas blogai. Ar gali būti dar blogiau?," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 25 January 1994, pp. 1-2.

²¹ "Seimo LDDP frakcijoje pareiškimas," *Tiesa*, 29 September 1993, p. 2. "Naujoji LDDP frakcijos grupė nori dirbti, o ne filosofuoti," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 30 September 1993, p. 2.

²² "Rinkimai bet koku oru nevyksta," *Tiesa*, 22 June 1993, p. 2. "Rinkimu Kaišiadoryse neišgelbejo krepšinio aikštelėje agitavęs premjeras, gydytojų brigados ir kaimo kapela," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 23 November 1993, pp. 1-2.

²³ "Pirmasis ryžtingas Lietuvos Prezidento žingsnis," *Lietuvos Rytas*, 11 January 1994, p. 4.

²⁴ "Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentui, LR Seimui, Nacionalinio Saugumo komitetui, Deklaracija," *Lietuvos Aidas*, 18 September 1993, p. 6. "Savanorių bėdas užkloja politikos šešėliai," *Lietuvos Aidas*, 22 September 1993, pp. 1,6.