



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH

23 February 1990

Dear Charles,

Richard
24/2

Elections in Lithuania

You should know how we propose to react to the outcome of the republican elections in Lithuania on 24 February.

The elections are almost certain to result in a victory for the local Popular Front (Sajudis) and will be an important step on the road towards genuine political independence. We doubt whether the immediate outcome of the elections will be a unilateral declaration of independence. The present leadership are on the whole realists. Our understanding is that they want either the elections themselves or a subsequent referendum to serve as a mandate for negotiations with Moscow, not on the basis of the new legislation now before the Supreme Soviet, but about what they allege to have been the Republic's illegal incorporation into the USSR.

We may well see, however, post-election statements of determination to secede, and considerable nationalist fervour. We propose to take the following line:

- (a) Reiterate our long-standing policy of non-recognition de jure of the Baltic States' forcible incorporation into the USSR.
- (b) Welcome the increasing freedom of the peoples of the Soviet Union to express their political views as demonstrated by the Lithuanian elections.
- (c) Restate our belief that in practical terms the question of the future of the Baltic States must be for their peoples to resolve together with the Soviet authorities. Welcome the fact that both appear to accept this. State our hope that a solution will be found to satisfy all concerned and (as necessary) express the hope that stability will not be endangered.
- (d) Underline our firm belief in the importance of not putting wider Soviet reforms at risk. This would serve no-one's interests. As necessary add that the West is determined not to take advantage of the situation in ways which could be seen as prejudicial to Soviet security.

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If asked about our attitude towards a new Lithuanian government once the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet has a nationalist majority, we can reserve our position until a new government is actually formed. But the independence movements have (at least until now) let it be known that it is their wish that we should not have government-to-government dealings with the Baltic authorities. Even if the Lithuanian people have freely elected the new republican Supreme Soviet, the structure of that government would still in Baltic eyes be illegal. From our own point of view we would not want to signal that we believed that the process of self-determination had gone far enough, if the people themselves were still making it quite clear that it had not.

Our caution would not imply reluctance to contemplate Baltic independence. But for the anomaly of the last 50 years to be removed, we need to see that whatever is finally agreed represents the will of the Baltic peoples freely expressed, and that it is sustainable in practical terms, ie that Moscow is prepared to live with it.

Yours ever,

Richard Gozney

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