

## PILOTING REGION, OR THE OUTSKIRTS? FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR THE KALININGRAD OBLAST

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Up to the end of the 80's the Kaliningrad Oblast, which is the most westward reaching and a strong military region of Russian Soviet Republic, separated from the homeland by the territories of republics being part of one federal state, remained a taboo subject as if it „did not exist" on the political map.

The situation of the region underwent violent change at the break of the eighties and nineties. The break-up of the USSR caused the region, which for decades remained a closed military base, to come once again into focus of political discussion. With Lithuania regaining independence, the Oblast was cut off from Russia by, at first one, and then several states (Latvia and Belarus). The final shape of the Oblast emerged on December 8, 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR.

Interest in Kaliningrad awoke anew at the end of the nineties of the XX century. The growing interest was associated with the EU and NATO enlargement eastwards. After the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the European Union, the Kaliningrad Oblast will become a Russian exclave neighbouring solely with EU countries and the Baltic Sea. Discussions on the future of the Oblast have continued for some time not only in Kaliningrad and Moscow, but also in Brussels, Vilnius, Warsaw and other capitals of Baltic states.

Numerous diplomats, trade mission representatives and military delegations visit Kaliningrad. In March and April of 2002 alone, besides the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs and EU representatives during a session of the Baltic Sea States Council in Swietłogorsk, the Oblast was visited by a delegation of the Civilian Dimension of Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and a Swedish governmental delegation<sup>1</sup>. The Pregoła River area was also visited by Belgian MPs as well as diplomats and representatives of the economic community from distant New Zealand and the United States. Talks were often held here by Polish and Lithuanian diplomats.

The interest in the Oblast also takes the form of various visions for the future of the region. During the last few years, many hypothetical scenarios were formulated about its future perspectives. There is no doubt that the "Kaliningrad puzzle" must be resolved.

From among the many scenarios<sup>2</sup> (some vary vague), both optimistic and pessimistic as to the future of the Oblast, let us focus on those which present diversified viewpoints and those which originate from various international centres.

One of the earlier developed concepts is the proposal of the Russian, German, Polish and Lithuania Condominium, established to administrate the Oblast, to bring it out of isolation and "step by step make capable of life" (Doenhoff M., 1991).

The same author suggests that the Oblast should become a model area for closer contacts of eastern and western Europe, with a free trade zone where Russians, Swedes, Poles Lithuanians and Germans could trade, invest and live side by side in peace. The basic conditions to be met would be for the Russian bound Kalinigrad to maintain considerable autonomy and own currency (Doenhoff M., 1992).

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedes announced the opening of their Consulate in Kaliningrad on October 1, 2002. However, for various reasons this date was not abide by.

<sup>2</sup> A few examples: Kaliningrad industrial depot, Baltic revolving disc, Military fortress, Delayed ignition Bomb, Albania on the Baltic, Autonomic German Republic, Harlem over the Pregoła, Black hole in the centre of Europe, Trojan horse, Blind ally.

Hanseatic Baltic Region is a concept for a state or cross state structure embracing Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the Kaliningrad Oblast (Kelam T., Rada Estonii, 1993).

The proposal of the Baltic Republic is an example of a sovereign and autonomic formation within the Russian Federation, where the governance system is based not on elected authorities but directly nominated authorities. The local administration should have wider powers in their dealings with neighbouring countries and the region should enjoy a number of economic concessions (Matoczkin J., former governor of the Kaliningrad Oblast, 1994).

Euroregion Kónigsberg - a debate in the European Parliament showed that an isolated from the outside world and economically failing Kaliningrad Oblast threatens the Baltic political and military space. In order to counteract the likelihood of such a situation there is a proposal to establish a kind of euroregion, which could be promoted by the European Union. Under the existing borders and appurtenance of the Kaliningrad Oblast to Russia, the Oblast could become a link joining western and eastern Europe, Belarus and three Baltic States provided necessary conditions, i.e. reduction of military forces to the level necessary for defending the Oblast itself were satisfied. The European Union would assist in adapting military facilities to civilian needs, introduce a strong Baltic currency, open customs depots, etc. The Kaliningrad Oblast would become an experimental floor for economic reforms and a point of departure for further West European undertakings on the Russian internal market (Hoff M., 1994).

Euroregion "Prussia" is a concept of the co-called "evicted", the German communities originating from former Eastern Prussia. The Euroregion would embrace the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voievodship, the Kaliningrad Oblast and Kłajpeda region. The European Union would be to assist this Euroregion in economic, infrastructural and environmental matters with due care for solving the problem of the "evicted". Moscow would gain a gate to the west and could develop its influence on the European Union. The Russian Baltic fleet could continue to station in Bałtyjsk. Brussels could propose a permanent place and the limited right to submit motions on Kaliningrad issues. Poland would obtain resources to develop the infrastructure of Warmia and Mazury (development of tourism centres, motorways, railway lines and an airport in Olsztyn). Lithuania could transport cargo shipments through Kaliningrad, and tourists through Kłajpeda. This could allow Prussia, according to the authors, to surmount to a certain extent the present partition (Das Ostpreussenblatt, 2001, nr 18 z V)

An example of the Lithuanian approach is the Borussii concept- the fourth independent Baltic state, where the percentage of the Russian population would decline (migration to other parts of Russia), with a simultaneous influx of Germans and Lithuanians. The official languages of equal rank would be: German, Lithuanian and Russian. In the opinion of the author this solution would end the territorial claims of Russia, Germany and Poland. (Venclova T., 1995)

In the opinion of the Polish geographer J. Zaleski (1993), "Baltisation" of Kaliningrad is the only sensible solution to the Oblast problem. Although presently Russia officially does not express such readiness, diplomatic negotiations may result in persuading Russia, sooner or later, to accept the only option for the future of the city and its direct hinterland under international control in Baltic Europe. This would define a logical future for the area. The solution would turn the Gdansk Gulf into one of the most dynamic regions of cross border co-operation between Poland-Kaliningrad and Lithuania.

Hong Kong on the Baltic (Russian Hong Kong) - a flourishing international commercial and business centre, a link between big economic systems with investors coming not only from Europe<sup>3</sup>.

A bridge between Russia and integrated Europe - a kind of enclave under the sole and sovereign governance of Russia special attention assigned to the economic and cultural aspects.

<sup>3</sup> The Hong Kong on the Baltic concept was popular in the media in 2001 thanks to the EU commissioner for foreign relation Chris Patten (former governor of Hong Kong) who presented a report on the relations of enlarged EU with Kaliningrad. Pattenograd - was the term describing Kaliningrad, which appeared in press headlines.

(Gorbienko L., XI 1996, *German Chancellor G. Schroeder and Russian President W. Putin* 9.04.2001).

An economic and cultural bridge between European Communities and Russia - this is the role proposed to Kaliningrad by the representatives of the European Union during the inauguration ceremony of the European Union Information Centre at the Kaliningrad University (9.06.2001).

Pilot Region in Russian relations with the European Union under the full control of Moscow, (*Strategy for developing relations between the Russian Federation and the European Union in the years 2000-2010*, 1999, Moscow).

The co-operation model of the European Union and Russia in the Northern Dimension<sup>4</sup> - since November 1999 the Kaliningrad Oblast is included in the Finish concept of „Northern Dimension”, in an attempt to change the adverse tendency resulting from the differences between the European Union and Russian regions neighbouring with the Union. This region is seen as a kind of laboratory of co-operation between the European Union and Russia. A Laboratory where new forms of co-operation are developed in all areas between Russia and the European Union and the Visit Card of Russia in the centre of Europe, this is the concept of V. Jegorova - the Governor of the Kaliningrad Oblast (13.05.2001).

Warsaw - according to vice prime minister Marek Pol (01.04.2002), during the discussion in Kaliningrad about the future of the Oblast - is authentically interested in developing multilateral relations with the Kaliningrad Oblast, which should and could become an experimental polygon for developing in future realistic contacts between Russia and Poland after our accession to the European Union. During the visit in Moscow in 2001, the prime ministers Miller and Kasjanov declared that the Kaliningrad Oblast "would become a model of regional co-operation and a polygon for Polish Russian economic co-operation". The Polish side supports all measures aimed at eliminating economic and civilisation barriers between the Kaliningrad Oblast and countries in the region, both present and future members of the European Union.

For many months Russians insisted that Union countries assign a special status to the Oblast, which would become an exclave inside the community, after Poland's and Lithuania's accession to the European Union. This effort, however, failed. There will be no extraterritorial corridors between the Kaliningrad Oblast and the Russian motherland, no sealed trains and visa exempt traffic across the territory of Poland. On 11.04 2002, Polish negotiators in Brussels rejected the option of concessions towards Moscow, whereas the Union accepted the decision.

While adjacent countries are restructuring their economic systems, the Oblast which does not conform with European standards, stands outside the economic network. Without serious restructuring of the economic system accession to the new system will not be possible. The enclave is experiencing progressing poverty and underdevelopment.

The president of Russia V. Putin, similarly as the tsar Peter the Great, is trying to bring Russia closer to Europe. Europe wants the same.

In case of the Kaliningrad Oblast the Russians are irrationally apprehensive and suspicious of economic and cultural expansion of the West. Then again, Moscow sees the issue in a different way than the authorities Kaliningrad do.

In the opinion of western diplomats, President Vladimir Putin is excessively apprehensive of bigger autonomy of the Oblast that could initiate the disintegration of Russia as the other 88 regions of Russia could follow in the steps of Kaliningrad.

Lack of a clear concept for the functioning of the Oblast, on the side of Moscow, gives rise to dissatisfaction in the Pregola area, it is emphasised that a certain degree of independence of the region would significantly facilitate governing of the enclave by its authorities after obtaining a trace of an international partner status. The residents of the Oblast are willing to co-operate with Europe. They proudly call themselves "EuroRussians". It is interesting to note that as much as 18 percent of young Kaliningrad people (below 30 years of age) have never been in Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. Patten, Enlargement of the European Union, an Opportunity for Kaliningrad, "Rzeczpospolita" April 9 2001

A situation may develop when some of the exclave inhabitants will see Russia as something distant and incomprehensible. A whole generation has grown up who do not consider Russia to be their homeland<sup>5</sup>.

As the Kaliningrad Oblast will become a Russian exclave surrounded by the European Union and NATO countries in the oncoming year, Timofiey Bordatchov, an expert from the Carnegie Foundation gives three variants of proceeding with the Kaliningrad Oblast which are under consideration by Moscow:

-Opening of the region and adjustment of legal norms to European standards - the least probable variant,

-Introduction in the enclave of the same laws, regulations and standards as in the other Russian regions - cut off by two borders from Russia, Kaliningrad will require extensive subventions otherwise it will be doomed to economic underdevelopment,

-Mobilizing model, Moscow shuts the borders, evacuates a considerable number of inhabitants from the region leaving only those connected with the Baltic fleet - resulting in a closed stronghold or "unsinkable aircraft carrier", a variant - according to its author, very probable.

Kaliningrad and its future is a key issue not only for its neighbours but also for the whole European Union. The issue continues to depend to a large degree on the attitude of Russia and its relations with integrating Europe. During the 10 session of the ministerial Council of Baltic Sea States in March 2002, the commissioner Patten advised Russia that it is responsible for development plans for Kaliningrad and that no one in the Union will come up with a "Marshal plan" for the exclave. Nevertheless, the European Union is ready to continue support on environmental protection, education, development of entrepreneurship and fighting AIDS. The annual value of assistance to the enclave exceeds 40 million euro.

According to an outstanding analyst from the Centre of Eastern Studies named after Bartosz Cichocki, the Kaliningrad Oblast does not require any special solutions from the European Union. The Union has for many years provided financial and technical assistance in solving the numerous problems of the enclave under the presently binding Union legislation. Russia should endow its western province with bigger independence in the legislative sphere and external relations so that the incompatibility of operating systems and excessive bureaucracy do not hamper the aid provided<sup>6</sup>. The same author sees the main threat for developing international co-operation around the enclave in the mindless readiness and accord to implement the Russian scenario. Kaliningrad should remain a subject of at least quadrilateral discussions: EU-Russia-Lithuania-Poland. It seems that the involvement of the US is also justified. Only the American political and financial potential, which Moscow must take into account, can stimulate progress in solving the problem of the enclave<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> W. Błanka - the vice governor of the Pskov Oblast said so during the international conference "Expansion of the European Union, problems and perspectives for Russia and its Regions".

<sup>6</sup> B. Cichocki, 12.04.2002, *Rosyjski status specjalny*, "Rzeczpospolita".

<sup>7</sup> B. Cichocki, *Do Kaliningradu z dystansem*, 24.02.2002, nr 8, "Tygodnik Powszechny".