

On 27 March, in response to the military manoeuvres in Lithuania, Mr. Clark called in the Soviet ambassador to "express personally his deep concern" over the situation. He presented a formal letter to the Soviets, reminding them that Mr. Shevardnadze had given repeated assurances that there would be no crackdown in the Baltic states. The External Affairs Minister "indicated to Mr. Shevardnadze that further interventions of this kind on the part of the Soviet authorities and military would certainly have regrettable repercussions on relations between Canada and the USSR."¹⁴

Canadian officials ensured that the Baltic would be on the agenda for the Gorbachev visit, despite hints by Soviet officials that Canada's own domestic situation vis-à-vis Québec would be an equally valid subject for discussion.¹⁵ President Gorbachev exchanged views with Prime Minister Mulroney over the Baltics on 30 May, reiterating that the USSR considered this a domestic issue; no outside interference was to be considered, nor was there to be outright independence for the Baltic republics.¹⁶ During meetings between the two foreign ministers, Mr. Shevardnadze rejected Canadian appeals to lift the blockade at that time.¹⁷

The Canadian Government was also faced with the delicate issue of direct relations with Baltic representatives throughout this period. During a visit by a Canadian three-party parliamentary committee in late April, Lithuanian officials sought a trade deal involving Canadian oil that would circumvent the Soviet blockade and test the republic's ability to conduct independent trade. This was rejected on the grounds that "For Canada to insert itself in the war of nerves and the war of words would not move the process forward. It may even be unhelpful to Lithuania."¹⁸

In response to a Lithuanian request for Canadian aid in April, Ottawa offered assistance in establishing a finance ministry and advice on handling customs matters. It also urged concerted action by its allies as the best Western means of addressing the crisis.¹⁹

Lithuanian officials visiting Canada seeking support for their independence also created some diplomatic difficulties. Mr. Clark did not attend a dinner in honour of visiting Lithuanian Vice-President Bromis Kuzmickas, fearing it could be construed incorrectly by the Soviets as

¹⁴ "Clark urges restraint by Soviet in Lithuania." Department of External Affairs, *Communiqué* No. 58 (27 March 1990).

¹⁵ Ross Howard, *Globe and Mail*, 25 May 1990, p. A3.

¹⁶ Ross Howard, *Globe and Mail*, 31 May 1990, p. A1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1; and *Commons Debates*, 31 May 1990, p. 12114.

¹⁸ Bruce Ward, *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 April 1990, p. 2.

¹⁹ Santinder Bindra, *Montreal Gazette*, 27 April 1990, p. 11.