

## The Kaliningrad Oblast in Polish Media between 1995-2006

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Abstract: The article analyses and sums up the predominant topics in the Polish press regarding the Kaliningrad Oblast between 1995-2006. It focuses on issues such as Poland's integration with the EU and its influence on Poland's relations with the Russian Federation and the Kaliningrad Oblast in particular.

Dynamic changes taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s have altered the relations between Western and Eastern European countries. The changes have affected Poland and its relations with the East, including the Russian Federation (RF). On the one hand, the relations were becoming better, political and economic relations were normalizing of which examples were: Russian forces pulling out of Poland and signing of contracts for the delivery of raw materials (mainly oil and gas). On the other, straining the relations was Poland's acceptance into NATO as well as its integration with the EU, which Russia was against.

Other significant factors in the relations were: diversification of gas deliveries into Poland, which was against Russia's interests, RF intervention in Chechnya, and Polish support of changes taking place in the Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.

Among the less imperative factors weighing on Polish-Russian relations were situations such as: treating of diplomats as *persona non grata* (in international relations this is always met with a counteraction), accusations of Polish politicians cooperating with the KGB, unfriendly treatment of tourists, businessmen or entrepreneurs by customs and immigration officers (for example: the Warsaw East Station incident, or permanent delays at the Kaliningrad border crossing and visas for Polish citizens after our entry into the EU).

Some of these issues were front page news and dominated public debate for some time, others were hardly mentioned by the media. However, it is interesting that despite the wide variety of materials on Polish-Russian relations in the press, these have so far not been compiled together by anyone<sup>2</sup>.

Among the above mentioned issues, only a small fraction of them relates to the Kaliningrad Oblast, however, there are more general ones which also relate to it, such as the issue of visas, the corridor from Kaliningrad to Belarus or the process of integration of Eastern countries with the EU.

One topic which the media devoted a lot of attention to was the introduction of visas for FR citizens after Poland's entry into the EU. The issue was initiated in July 2000 by "Gazeta Wyborcza" after a meeting between FR vice-minister of foreign affairs, Ivan Ivanov with EU commissar, Gunter Verheugen. Jacek Pawlicki in his article discussed economic

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<sup>1</sup> The text analyses only materials which discuss the Kaliningrad Oblast. Among these chosen were those of most interest to publishers, the ones of more marginal meaning are discussed toward the end of the article.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sakson: Obwód Kaliningradzki w opinii prasy polskiej 1990-1994. "Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie" 1995, nr 3, p. 301-304; M. Chelminiak: Obraz stosunków polsko-rosyjskich w publicystyce polskiej lat 90. XX wieku, [in:] Polska w środowisku międzynarodowym, ed. T. Łoś-Nowak, A. Dudek, Legnica 2003. Materials on the District from a foreign perspective are by H. Głębocki (Russian media) and E. Wojnowski (German media). H. Głębocki: Media o stosunkach polsko-rosyjskich (February-December 2001), "Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny" 2001, nr 4; E. Wojnowski: Obwód Kaliningradzki w publikacjach niemieckich w latach 1989-1994, "Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie" 1995, nr 1.

issues regarding integration but also mentioned the fact the FR will ask for non visa entry into Poland and Lithuania for its Kaliningrad inhabitants<sup>3</sup>.

“Gazeta Wyborcza” devoted most space to the issue of visas and integration with the EU and its materials reflect EU representatives’ evolution of opinions regarding Poland and Lithuania’s contacts with the Kaliningrad Oblast just before our entry into its structures. A starting point was European Parliament’s expectations toward Poland from a resolution/report which Gazeta quoted on October 3, 2000. In it we can find citations such as, “economic, cultural and political cooperation with the Russian region, Kaliningrad, is a basic goal” or deputies ask Poland and Lithuania to, “look for positive solutions in order for Kaliningrad to also benefit from regional integrations”, which, according to Pawlicki, a Gazeta correspondent in Brussels, could be interpreted as no visas for Kaliningrad inhabitants<sup>4</sup>.

The visa issue was also discussed in “Rzeczpospolita”, where, in December 2000, published was an article on the hopes and expectations of Vladimir Jegorov, Kaliningrad’s new governor. In a press conference he stated that he is in favour of FR proposal for non visa traffic and that he hopes that Poland will consider it favourably<sup>5</sup>.

In 2001 this issue was still hot, predominantly due to two reports: the EU report on EU relations with the Kaliningrad Oblast and the Batory Foundation report. The EU report, which was the basis for negotiations between EU, FR, Poland and Lithuania, proposed a series of resolutions (expansion of border crossing, transit facilitations, transit corridors through EU into Kaliningrad) which were to ease Poland and Lithuania’s integration with EU not isolating, at the same time, the Oblast. However, the report also stated that Kaliningrad inhabitants cannot count on non visa entry into the EU and that the Oblast will not be integrated with the EU customs wise<sup>6</sup>. What is interesting, the issue of transit corridors, which evoked heated discussion among politicians earlier, was not focused on by the media. All in all, and in comparison to European Parliament’s reports from 2000, noticeable now was the firm stance on EU policy regarding visas.

The Batory Foundation report, discussed by Gazeta, focused on a characteristic of EU activity (pilot programs) and criticised FR authorities (for lack of clear vision on the future of Kaliningrad). The conclusion was that Polish and Lithuanian authorities should aim for a liberal visa policy for Oblast inhabitants in order to avoid the region’s isolation. It should be noted that during accession preparations Poland did, in fact, attempt to meet this aim by proposing low cost visas for the Oblast so that they would be affordable for the inhabitants<sup>7</sup>.

In 2002 the visa issue was most frequently discussed by the press regarding Polish-Russian relations. The visa subject was co-related to the extraterritorial corridor issue through the territory of Poland and Lithuania. The problem in the negotiations was that FR did not wish to discuss these matters with the EU but preferred to do so only with Poland and Lithuania assuming that it would be easier to exert pressure on these countries alone in order to get favourable solutions for its citizens<sup>8</sup>. As Jędrzej Bielecki noticed, Russia’s stubbornness can result in the isolation of Kaliningrad from the world and has so far led to EU firming its stand. EU foreign affairs commissar, Chris Patten, said that there is no possibility of a special corridor through the territory of Poland and Lithuania<sup>9</sup>. It was also commented that concessions toward FR were influenced by the September 11, 2001 events and FR’s new role

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<sup>3</sup> J. Pawlicki: Rosja o rozszerzeniu UE. „Gazeta Wyborcza” 05.07.2000.

<sup>4</sup> J. Pawlicki: Czego chce od Polski Parlament Europejski? Od restytucji do prostytucji. „Gazeta Wyborcza” 03.10.2000.

<sup>5</sup> P. Kościński: W ramach Rosji, ale bliżej Europy. “Rzeczpospolita” 20.12.2000.

<sup>6</sup> J. Pawlicki: Przyszłość Kaliningradu według Brukseli. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 18.01.2001.

<sup>7</sup> M. Wojciechowski: Przyjazna enklawa. Raport o Kaliningradzie. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 26.01.2001.

<sup>8</sup> J. Bielecki: Przyszłość Kaliningradu. Korytarz przez Polskę i Litwę. “Rzeczpospolita” 29.01.2002.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

in its contacts with the West, however, the EU has also established a firm border line for such concessions which would not be crossed<sup>10</sup>.

Since May 2002 regular meetings were taking place between EU, accessing countries and Russia. They began in Moscow at a summit on May 29, 2002 and ended in November 2002 at another summit in Brussels. The meetings were reported on in detail by the Polish media. Generally, what was noticed were Russia's proposals which were considered unrealistic and Putin's unyielding attitude<sup>11</sup>. The articles commented on Russia's negotiation tactics<sup>12</sup> and described the details of visa resolutions as well as all other related issues. They were comprehensive and objective in character, illustrated the process of reaching consensus and what it meant for Kaliningrad, Poland and Lithuania<sup>13</sup>. Between May and November 2002 many proposals and discussions took place including all interested parties. Initially, Putin proposed a transition period with visas, which by 2007/2008 would be done away with<sup>14</sup>. The next compromise proposal stated that Russian citizens could travel without visas only through Lithuania via buses or trains without stops in Lithuania<sup>15</sup>. At the same time it was reported that Russia will require visas from EU members and it is increasing the number of flights between Kaliningrad and Moscow and sharply cutting prices<sup>16</sup>.

In the Polish press there was also a number of sarcastic remarks commenting Russian representatives' statements. For example, Ernest Skalski commented on Duma's chairman, Gienadij Sielezniov's remark that lack of cooperation on the Kaliningrad Oblast will lead to the slowing down of our acceptance into the EU and Schengen. He said that, "Upon Moscow's orders we turned down the Marshall plan, did not join the World Bank or the IMF and instead joined the RWPG and the Warsaw Pact. But that was a long time ago. We have been an independent country for three years, and only Sielezniov has failed to notice it"<sup>17</sup>. Krystyna Kurczab-Redlich in her article, published in "Polityka", wrote about Russian press' biased stance after the decisions made at the 10<sup>th</sup> EU Summit which suggested that the Kaliningrad District will be completely cut off from the world and will be "fenced off by barbed wire"<sup>18</sup> as one newspaper put it. Redlich pointed out that the issues generally get blown out of proportion by the media, in the press or TV programmes. The Russians were even told that the "visa blockade" will result in them losing this territory (that EU will annex it) and that they will lose touch with their homeland and culture. The author pointed out that Poland and Lithuania's positions were omitted altogether as well as issues that FR has not

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<sup>10</sup> J. Bielecki: Granice ustępstw wobec Rosji. "Rzeczpospolita" 29.01.2002.

<sup>11</sup> J. Pawlicki: Unia Europejska i Kaliningrad. Korytarz niezgody. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13.05.2002; J. Pawlicki: Szczyt UE – Rosja w Moskwie. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 30.05.2002; [AP]: Zagranie Putina. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 31.05.2002; W. Radziwinowicz, T. Bordaczoin: Kaliningrad niezgody. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 31.05.2002; [JAP, JJK] W Sewilli o Kaliningradzie. Nie korytarz, lecz wizy, ale łatwo dostępne. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19.06.2002; [MAW]: Schengen z opóźnieniem. Duma o Kaliningradzie. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 20.06.2002; [MAW]: Putin: bez wiz. „Gazeta Wyborcza” 28.08.2002.

<sup>12</sup> This regards Russia's attempts for bilateral negotiations with countries accessing EU (Poland and Lithuania) as well as those part of the Schengen agreement. See: J.J. Komar: Rosyjskie nie. Litwa. Kart dla Kaliningradu. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 13.08.2002.

<sup>13</sup> J. J. Komar: Litwa wprowadza nowe zasady ruchu z Kaliningradem. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 30.06.2002; J. Pawlicki: Porozumienie w sprawie Kaliningradu. Pociągi pod specjalnym nadzorem. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 09.11-11.11.2002; J. Pawlicki: Na razie wizy bez wiz. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 19.09.2002.

<sup>14</sup> J. Pawlicki: Wizy tak, ale na 5 lat. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 03.09.2002.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> W. Radziwinowicz: Życ z wizami. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 02.09.2002. In the meantime there were talks establishing cheap flights from Kaliningrad to EU subsidized (50%) by the EU. See: [JAP]: UE-Kaliningrad. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 14.10.2002.

<sup>17</sup> E. Skalski: Sowieckie gadanie. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 10.10.2002.

<sup>18</sup> K. Kurczab-Redlich: Z Rosji do Rosji. Polityka nr 26, 2002.

solved within the Kaliningrad District (unratified border treaty with Lithuania, no agreements on re-admission, ineffective administration regarding changes of passports to international)<sup>19</sup>.

The press also mentioned a compromise proposal by one of the Scandinavian countries. It was a “Kaliningrad Pass” instead of visas which would be issued by Lithuania or Poland<sup>20</sup>. In the end the transit and visa issue was finalised at the 10<sup>th</sup> EU Summit, on October 29, 2002. It was a simplified transit through Lithuania and an introduction of visas by countries accessing EU. Consequently, Poland introduced visas on July 1, 2003<sup>21</sup>.

The other issue of general interest of Polish press was that of a corridor linking the District with the main FR territory. Discussions on the matter took place in October 1994 and were strictly Polish-Russian and economic in character<sup>22</sup>. On an international level this matter was initiated by Poland when the local authorities of the Suwalskie voivodeship and the Grodziensk district were considering common transport connections and cooperation on the Iwanowicze – Grodno – Kaliningrad gas pipeline. These plans were acutely criticised by Lithuanian authorities and the press materials published then revealed Russia’s indirect interests in the matter<sup>23</sup>. Kaliningrad governor, Juri Matoczkin’s proposal was put forward to Belarus’ president Lukaszenko regarding the construction of a railway/automobile main line. Local Polish authority activities were in tune with Russian expectations but Polish Foreign Affairs Office stated that, “this route does not fit in with existing project plans”<sup>24</sup>. The statement must not have been firm enough as the Russians continued to propose new versions of the project. Generally, Russian activity was inconsistent since, on the one hand Yelcyn after his meeting with Lukaszenko talked about an extraterritorial motorway<sup>25</sup>, while on the other, Foreign Minister Jewgienij Primakoy and governor Matoczkin denied that Russia had any plans regarding building of a corridor<sup>26</sup>, and Duma chairman called the issue of the Grodno – Kaliningrad corridor a most serious mistake of Russian diplomacy<sup>27</sup>.

In April 1996, *Gazeta* published a comprehensive article on the issue of the corridor with several resolutions which were reached by the Polish-Russian Transport forum, the Poland/Kaliningrad Cooperation Committee and the Polish Public Roads Administration<sup>28</sup>, which was to outline the route of the transit road through Polish territory. The authors also mentioned that Russians wished to have a connection with Kaliningrad when they were pulling their troops out of Poland in 1992 and the term ‘corridor’ was coined in November

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<sup>19</sup> K. Kurczab-Redlich, op. cit., “Polityka” nr 26, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> “Kaliningrad Pass” is a document for simplified transit allowing travel through Lithuania from the Oblast to Russia. Scandinavian countries proposed for this document to be in accordance with Schengen, which would include all EU countries. It was rejected, however. EU representatives stated that if Russia did not demand special treatment from Poland, then visas for their citizens will be in effect. [JAP]: Schengen 2007? “Gazeta Wyborcza” 21.09-22.09.2002; J. Pawlicki, J.J. Komar, W. Radziwinowicz: Unia bliżej Rosji. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 28.09-29.09.2002; J. Pawlicki: Pociągi niezgody. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 01.10.2002.

<sup>21</sup> J. Pawlicki: Kaliningrad tak – kalifat nie. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 12.11.2002

<sup>22</sup> Discussion took place at the Polish-Russian forum for trade and economic cooperation. See: P. Popowski: Rosyjskie rozważania o polskim korytarzu. “Rzeczpospolita” 15.02.1996.

<sup>23</sup> Proof that FR had other than just local interests in the matter was the fact that the Białostockie voivodeship which has a much longer border line with the Grodziensk district than the Suwalskie voivodeship was trying to reach a transborder agreement for over two years without success. See: M. Narbutt: Korytarz do Kaliningradu przez Suwalszczyznę? “Rzeczpospolita” 20.06.1995.

<sup>24</sup> P. Popowski, op. cit., “Rzeczpospolita” 15.02.1996.

<sup>25</sup> A. Łomanowski: Propozycja z Kremla. Korytarz przez Polskę do Kaliningradu. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 28.02.1996.

<sup>26</sup> [krzem, PAP]: Twardo o NATO. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 15.03.1996; C. Goliński: Wiele hałasu o nic? “Gazeta Wyborcza” 15.03.1996.

<sup>27</sup> [PAP, BW]: Krytycznie o „korytarzu”. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 19.03.1996.

<sup>28</sup> Presently General Domestic Road Administration, URL<<http://gddkia.sprint.com.pl/>>.

1993<sup>29</sup>. It could be concluded from the article that local authorities were predominantly counting on a land connection between Kaliningrad and Grodno, anticipating a development of infrastructure, industry as well as a creation of new work places and did not take into consideration the threats which could result from such a connection.

The fact that political implications of such an investment could have been far reaching Poland might have found out closer to its entry into the EU. As was noted above, the matter of the corridor was brought up later and correlated with the visa issue which was widely discussed in 2001.

In a document entitled “Chance for Kaliningrad”, published by “Rzeczpospolita”, Chris Patten, EU Foreign Policy commissar, suggested that he, as a EU representative, will look into a resolution that would satisfy all parties, at the same time underlining that it will not be easy and it will take time and that so far no final solutions have been implemented<sup>30</sup>. Another discussion on this subject was sparked by Leonid Kozik, Belarus vice prime minister, proposing the construction of a railway between Kaliningrad and Grodno<sup>31</sup>. Even though his proposal was not a realistic one, it sparked the discussion on the corridor once again.

District governor, Jegorov, in a interview for “Wprost”, proposed looking for other alternatives instead of the introduction of visas<sup>32</sup>. In a thorough analysis, Antoni Z. Kamiński pointed out a larger scope of issues regarding the District and its transit<sup>33</sup>. He noticed that for the last ten years the Oblast was a secondary issue in Russian policy and not given much attention to. If the authorities are so interested in it now, it may suggest that they have other plans regarding it. It may not just be about making life easier for Kaliningrad inhabitants. The author goes on to conclude that, “First of all, these are demands for unlimited access to Kaliningrad by countries which are a part of united Europe, are part of EU identity (...) The Community is delineated by its internal regulatory body and a border line (...) This border line has military (defensive), political (control over movement of people) and economic (trade and services, customs) and symbolic (separating ‘us’ from ‘them’) functions (...) Russian fears regarding isolation of this district from the continent (...) are not completely unfounded. However, their dealing with this issue is typically Russian (...) and hard to accept and if met with EU submissiveness, it could be dangerous to the European ideas”<sup>34</sup>.

“Wprost” commentator, Jerzy Marek Nowakowski, made similar remarks, noticing that parallel to the discussion on extraterritorial connections, FR was also fighting for the creation of a buffer zone between its territory and Western Europe and striving to maintain an energy monopoly in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>35</sup>. In the end, the ‘corridor’ issue was finalised at the 10<sup>th</sup> EU Summit by implementation of the discussed above visas for Russian citizens living in the Kaliningrad Oblast<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> M. Matys, J. Hofmann, N. Borowska: Droga do niepodległości. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 15.04.1996.

<sup>30</sup> Ch. Patten: Szansa dla Kaliningradu. “Rzeczpospolita” 09.04.2001.

<sup>31</sup> C. Goliński: Korytarzem do Kaliningradu? “Gazeta Wyborcza” 08.05.2001. L. Kozik’s offer was surprising as it proposed Belarus, together with FR, common control over Kaliningrad. His proposal can be considered part of political games going on between Belarus’ president, Lukaszenko and FR authorities.

<sup>32</sup> Wizytówka Rosji. Rozmowa Jacka Potockiego z Władimirem Jegorowem. “Wprost” 2001, nr 963.

<sup>33</sup> A. Z. Kamiński: Powrót korytarzy. “Rzeczpospolita” 22.06.2002.

<sup>34</sup> A. Z. Kamiński, op. cit., “Rzeczpospolita” 22.06.2002. Cf: P. Bratkowski: Bez tytanu i tytanów. “Rzeczpospolita” 23.03.1996.

<sup>35</sup> J.M. Nowakowski: Korytarz do gorszej Europy. “Wprost” 2002, nr 1022.

<sup>36</sup> Gazeta illustrated Russia’s unreal interest in the fate of Kaliningrad inhabitants with material from “Izwestia”: “Kaliningrad for a long time did not interest central authorities. (...) Even when the neighbouring countries became independent. That was the first call, Kaliningrad not only physically but also psychologically was outside Russia’s borders. People of Kaliningrad had to start counting only themselves and started living more like Westerners. The situation started improving on its own without much help from the central authorities.

Aside from visa and corridor issues, other matters discussed in the Polish press were of more general geopolitical character, regarding the situation in modern Russia and within the Kaliningrad District. Stressed were matters such as NATO and EU integration processes in western Russia and the disintegration processes within the old Soviet Union. According to Zbigniew Brzeziński, Kaliningrad should not paralyse integration processes, however, the integration of the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic may be premature<sup>37</sup>. According to “Rzeczpospolita”, Russia does not agree with Baltic states’ aspirations and will continue to impose various solutions such as the Yelcyn’s proposal for the “trust zone”<sup>38</sup>. A Russian journalist for “Itoga” interviewed by “Gazeta Wyborcza” attempted to answer the question to what extent Russia is still a federation and whether the disintegration will not change it into a confederation?<sup>39</sup>. “Rzeczpospolita” also published in depth analyses on the changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and their influence on Russia’s geopolitical power<sup>40</sup> as well as the reasons for conflicts in Polish-Russian relations<sup>41</sup>.

Polish press also devoted much space to Kaliningrad District economic issues, dividing them into three categories:

- general economic functioning of the District;
- Polish investments in the Oblast;
- functioning of the “Jantar Sphere”, later special economic sphere.

Regarding economic functioning of the District, journalists decided that it is greatly dependent on Russia and its supply of resources, including electric energy from Lithuania<sup>42</sup>. The number of foreign investments in the area is rather limited due to an unstable legal/tax situation there as well as the difficulty in obtaining land by foreigners. Most inhabitants of Kaliningrad who have their own businesses began by trading in the 1990s<sup>43</sup>. Despite the economic crash in 1998, the economy of the region is developing and there are a number of new investments<sup>44</sup>. The growth is slow but steady although that may be an over optimistic attitude in comparison to what is presented in other materials<sup>45</sup>. To answer the question

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I have a feeling that Moscow will do everything to avoid a spectacle. People may live in poverty but Russia will not allow disintegration.” Cf: A. Achunoin: Prawo do secesji. “Izwiestia”. Cited from: Kiosk z rosyjskimi gazetami – co będzie z Kaliningradem po rozszerzeniu Unii Europejskiej. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 29.07.2002. Within this context, there were other articles in Polish press characterising Oblast inhabitants’ critical attitude toward Russia’s political elites and their lack of interest in the enclave. There were also articles illustrating Lithuania’s interest in the District. Most of these were published by Gazeta Wyborcza which depicted the differences of opinion between Oblast inhabitants and FR authorities. See: W. Radziwinowicz: Zdecyduje Rosja. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 16.02.2001; N. Borowska: Kaliningradzka kolebka. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 07-07.12.2002; T. Bordaczoin: Polityka realna i wirtualna. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 24-25.03.2001; W. Radziwinowicz: Atrakcyjny Kaliningrad. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23.03.2001; W. Radziwinowicz: Rosja w środku Unii. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 18.05.2001; W. Portnikoin: Który Putin jest prawdziwy? “Polityka” 2002, nr 6; Przekraczamy granice przyszłości. Interview with Algirdas Brazauskas, Lithuania’s Prime Minister. “Wprost” 2002, nr 1045; M. Narbutt: Mapa Europy do dyskusji? “Rzeczpospolita” 07.08.1995.

<sup>37</sup> M. Węgrowska: Szanse Słowenii i Litwy. “Rzeczpospolita” 20.11.1998.

<sup>38</sup> M. Węgrowska: Strefa zaufania. “Rzeczpospolita” 08.12.1997.

<sup>39</sup> Ratunek w konfederacji. Wywiad z Denisem Dragunskim. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 09.09.1998.

<sup>40</sup> I. Kobrinska: According to many Russian politicians the changes taking place in Central/Eastern Europe are not good for Russia’s geopolitical interests. “Rzeczpospolita” 04.03.1997; P. Pomowski, M. Tryc-Ostrowska: Najważniejsze gaz i Kaliningrad. “Rzeczpospolita” 25.08.2001.

<sup>41</sup> A. Magdziak-Miszewska: Całkowita asymetria. “Rzeczpospolita” 04.03.1997.

<sup>42</sup> J. Czarnecki: Polski system przesyłowy może się Rosjanom przydać. “Rzeczpospolita” 18.04.1996.

<sup>43</sup> I. Miecik: Strefa lęków. „Polityka” 2001, nr 5; M. Jaranowski: Wesoły komentarz. “Polityka” 2004, nr 27.

<sup>44</sup> P. Kudzia: Jak Kaliningrad radzi sobie z gospodarczym krachem. “Wprost” 1998, nr 825;

<sup>45</sup> [jap]: Niebezpieczne mity. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 10-12.10.1996; J. Piński: Furtka do Rosji. “Wprost” 2002, nr 1007.

whether Kaliningrad is “a Baltic Hongkong, a sad recollection of past greatness or a rusty and devastated fleet base”, journalists said that Kaliningrad in 2004 resembles Poland more than some towns in Warmia and Mazury. This was said by a Russian journalist, however, which should throw some warning to the readers in his assessment of the situation<sup>46</sup>.

As far as Polish investments in the region, the picture painted by our media is not a uniform one. Some articles are enthusiastic describing investments such as a bus assembly plant in Kaliningrad and the development of food trade, while others, such as “Wprost” in an article from 2002, state that, “there is only one Polish entrepreneur left doing business in that area”<sup>47</sup>. Both “Gazeta Wyborcza” and “Rzeczpospolita” describe the district as difficult for investments<sup>48</sup>. The issues mentioned most often were the continually changing legal regulations and difficulties in purchasing land. According to Marek Kostrzewski from UW Department of International Relations, Polish people who wish to invest in the East need not to believe in myths about that market. Most common mistakes made are, “faith in fair trade, the vision of Poland as a bridge between East and West and belief that Russia is only Moscow, Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg”<sup>49</sup>. Polish people need to start producing on the spot, in the Oblast and then take advantage of Russian connections in the Far East<sup>50</sup>.

Another issue frequently mentioned by the press was the “Jantar Sphere” and Russian Special Economic Sphere (RSSE). It was Kaliningrad governor, Matoczkin’s idea initiated in August 1989 when he was the Dean of Economy at Kaliningrad University. He proposed the introduction of low taxes and abolishing of duty on goods imported into the District, also on goods transported into the Soviet Union if 30% of their value was made in the Oblast<sup>51</sup>. The sphere, named Jantar, was created by Yelcyn’s decree and Matoczkin became the governor of the District. His vision, however, did not turn out as successfully as planned. By March 15, 1989, by another decree, most concessions were taken away, although special temporary and restricted economic entitlements were approved<sup>52</sup>. New regulations, effective November 15, 1995, regarded the creation of RSSE and were parallel with elections for new governor, won by Leonid Gorbienka supported by Communists.

Both, “Gazeta Wyborcza” and “Rzeczpospolita” reported the events taking place then, the changing customs regulations and governor elections. The mood of articles was far from enthusiastic and rather somber. On the one hand, due to a new governor, journalists were expecting an imposition of stricter regulations on business freedoms, indicated by more restrictive RSSE laws. On the other, some authors described the District as, “returning to good graces” and “opening of Kaliningrad” since it became a duty free sphere<sup>53</sup>. It is hard to say

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<sup>46</sup> J. Urbanowicz, G. Ślubowski: Przylądek złudnej nadziei. “Wprost” 2001, nr 953; P. Greczuszkin: Województwo kaliningradzkie. “Wprost” 2004, nr 1109.

<sup>47</sup> P. Wroński: Wola współpracy. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 18.01.2002; [QUB]: Przez Kaliningrad do Rosji. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 18.01.2002; [mm]: Kielbasą w Kaliningrad. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 07.05.1996; M. Graczyk, J. Piński, op. cit., “Wprost” 2002, nr 1007.

<sup>48</sup> J. Niczyporowicz: Czarna perła. “Rzeczpospolita” 11.03.1995. When it comes to Gazeta Wyborcza’s publications, it was usually the local supplements, such as the Olsztyn and Gdansk editions, which often wrote about problems at border crossings (long waiting periods, corruption, continually changing regulations, etc. as well as the very difficult sailing across the Pilawa Strait. Cf. T. Krzyżak: Kanał wojenny. “Wprost” 2004, nr 1129.

<sup>49</sup> [jap], op. cit., “Gazeta Wyborcza” 10-12.10.1996.

<sup>50</sup> [jap], op. cit., “Gazeta Wyborcza” 10-12.10.1996.

<sup>51</sup> I. Miecik, op.cit., “Polityka” 2001, nr 5.

<sup>52</sup> A. Kaczyński: Przedpokój Rosji. “Rzeczpospolita” 17.08.1995.

<sup>53</sup> J. Haszczyński: Nadszedł czas porządków. “Rzeczpospolita” 09.11.1996; I. Trusewicz: Kaliningrad wraca do łask. “Rzeczpospolita” 13.01.1996; W. Radziwinowicz: Kaliningradzkie otwarcie. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 15.01.1996; [ricz]: Wolna strefa Kaliningrad. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23.01.1996; [bor, ricz]: Ustawowy Kaliningrad. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 02.02.1996; [bor, ricz]: Obwód bezcelny. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 05.02.1996.

what kind of influence the new regulations had on economic activity in the region. The matter was not discussed in depth by the Polish media until January 2001 when the District was deprived of its customs privileges and when equal duties were imposed on entire Russian territory. Also, as in the past, the changes were parallel to a change in governor. Vladimir Jegorov, Putin's protégé and Baltic Fleet commander became the new Kaliningrad leader<sup>54</sup>. This change, according to Polish press, resulted in economic paralysis of the District and a general stalemate among entrepreneurs<sup>55</sup>.

Economic publications also discussed the subject of infrastructure development to promote business and trade activity. In 1996, in connection with the 'corridor' issue between Belarus and the District, Polish Minister of Transport and Maritime Industry, Bogusław Liberadzki, stated that Poland does not see the possibility of building the corridor but is interested in the development of North-South transit infrastructure. A government project of road construction was being prepared, while the Kaliningrad – Slovakia, South Europe and Belarus transit routes were to first be analysed by experts<sup>56</sup>. In general, the press was of the opinion that both in Poland and the District there was agreement for the necessity of road and railway infrastructure development as well as the gas pipeline but both sides have great problems with obtaining the funds necessary for such investments<sup>57</sup>.

Another issue of interest of Polish press was militarization of the Kaliningrad District. It was largely spurred by comments made by the American daily "The Washington Times", although the topic was present in the Polish press earlier as well. The presence of the Russian army within the District raised fears which were largely due to past history when the Oblast was a military navy base which stationed 120,000-130,000 soldiers until 1991<sup>58</sup>. However, the published texts were rather factual and toned down emotions wise<sup>59</sup>.

As far as "Washington Times" articles, the first was published on January 3, 2001. The daily reported potential nuclear weapons being stored on the territory of the Oblast. The Russians denied this but, according to "Gazeta Wyborcza", the matter was suspect enough since aside from Poland also Germany and Norway asked the Americans for further proof as, supposedly, they had intelligence satellite photographs of the objects in question. The journalists reported that no NATO expert wished to comment on the "Washington Times" news and they themselves asked the question as to why the Americans did not inform their

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<sup>54</sup> W. Putin cannot officially support any of the candidates but he did not comply with this regulation when he photographed himself, for campaign purposes, with Jegorov. See: I. Miecik, op.cit., "Polityka" 2001, nr 5. The election theme was present in 2000 in many press materials when all the candidates were presented as well as their programmes. After the results Jegorov was also focused on. See: A. Żebrowska: Admirał woli biznes. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 06.11.2000; [P.K., PAP, DPA, AFP]: Admirał gubernatorem. "Rzeczpospolita" 21.11.2000; W. Radziwinowicz: Admirał Kaliningradu. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 21.11.2000.

<sup>55</sup> W. Radziwinowicz: Moskwa dusi Kaliningrad. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 26.01.2001; P. Sierżputowski: Rower na kwadratowych kołach. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 06.03.2002.

<sup>56</sup> K. Grzegorzółka: Zamiast korytarza eksterytorialnego – tranzytowy. "Rzeczpospolita" 07.03.1996.

<sup>57</sup> A. Dzielska: Berlina. "Wprost" 2000, nr 910; [RICZ]: Autostrada i rura. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 06.03.2002.

<sup>58</sup> P. Popowski: Rosyjska wyspa w europejskim morzu. "Rzeczpospolita" 23.03.2001. Regarding this issue there were some disparities reported. According to "Polityka", the West estimated the number of soldiers at 100,000, the Polish media reported around 200,000 while Russian politicians claimed that there were only 25,000 (Vladimir Szumiejko) or 50,000. (J. Matoczkin). See: M. Ostrowski: Gdzie jest wróg? "Polityka" 1999, nr 11.

<sup>59</sup> M. Ostrowski, op. cit., "Polityka" 1999, nr 11; [Reuter, krzem]: Kaliningrad bez broni jądrowej. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 28.03.1997; P. Jendroszczyk: Nowa broń w Kaliningradzie. "Rzeczpospolita" 12.06.1998. The most pessimistic was Dmitrij Babicz's article („Moskowskije Nowosti") published by „Gazeta Wyborcza". The journalist stated that there is lack of cooperation between NATO and FR as well as lack of regulation against militarization, which is not good. See: D. Babicz: Zapalny Kaliningrad. "Gazeta Wyborcza" 20-21.01.2001.



allies about their suspicions<sup>60</sup>. “The Washington Times” discussed this subject again on February 15, 2001, stating that satellite photographs, “documented the transport of Russian arms from a port near St. Petersburg to Kaliningrad”. This time the news did not create a sensation. Polish press concluded that such information either proves that Americans have no idea as to what attitude to take on the Oblast or it is the subject of internal conflict between the Republicans and the Democrats<sup>61</sup>.

Aside from the major issues discussed above, there were also other ones mentioned by the press less extensively. These dealt with current and historical events. Among the more interesting ones were: an article on the food crisis in the Oblast in 1998 with people of Kaliningrad and Baltijsk<sup>62</sup> asking for help, an article reminiscing German presence in East Prussia<sup>63</sup>, information on the cooperation of local authorities<sup>64</sup>, and some tourist information<sup>65</sup>.

All in all, it can be said the image of the Kaliningrad District as portrayed by the press between 1995-2006 greatly evolved during this period of time. Initially, the materials were more enthusiastic describing increasing contacts between people, investments and economic exchanges. The issue of the ‘corridor’ did not change matters much. Then, it was predominantly Poland’s entry into the EU that created fears and anxieties about the nature of future contacts. However, Poland’s firm stand on the issue of visas for Russian citizens, extensively commented by the Polish press, resulted in quick solving of the matter. Despite multiple uncertainties regarding future mutual relations, the general picture is a rather positive one just like the tone of relations in the press. We can be hopeful that such a positive tone of press relations will also be reflected in real contacts with this Eastern partner.

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<sup>60</sup> B. Węglarczyk: Wuj Sam wiedział nie powiedział. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 08.01.2001.

<sup>61</sup> K. Darewicz, J. Haszczyński, P. Popowski: Co widać z satelity. “Rzeczpospolita” 16.02.2001; B. Węglarczyk, op. cit., “Gazeta Wyborcza” 08.01.2001.

<sup>62</sup> G. Szaro: Dary dla sąsiadów. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 23.09.1998; N. Borowskaja, W. Radziwinowicz: Kaliningrad się broni. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 09.09.1998.

<sup>63</sup> [P.G.]: Dwie wizje przyszłości. “Rzeczpospolita” 19.09.1995; A. Sakson: Cień Koenigsberga. “Gazeta Wyborcza” 20.09.2002.

<sup>64</sup> I. Trusewicz: Kaliningrad nieokreślonych szans. “Rzeczpospolita” 29.01.1997.

<sup>65</sup> J. Urbanowicz: Bursztynowa stolica. “Wprost” 2001, nr 977.