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**Speech delivered by Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis,
ex-president of the Republic of Lithuania**

The concept of sovereignty played a great role for Lithuania's liberation from Soviet captivity. That latter lasted, from the beginning of Second World War, short to 50 years (1940-1990 with an excerpt of German occupation, 1941-1944).

While many commentators and politicians in West used to talk about our wish **to regain** the state sovereignty if given back by the gracious hands of Mr. Gorbachev, we followed our own path and concept based on international law. It states, that sovereignty belongs to the nation and cannot be taken away by *force majeure*, as in our case – by occupying Soviet communist empire, – and is not a thing to be out or back.

It is like your home appeared taken by armed bandit, thus you became deprived from ability to rule it, anyway, the house remains being yours.

And what's then?

After your rightful resistance was crushed, you stayed waiting for a long in a patient believe, that times will change and your right to own your house will become a real, independent type of national life.

That is why, after decades of variety of forms of resistance and efforts to preserve our national identity, we went ahead stating: now is the time!

It was the end of eighties, after Soviets proclaimed in Moscow new policy of economy reforms which included also the greater space for discussions, criticism of governance and openness for societies' contribution into decision making. All that meant some limited democracy or political reforms as well. Most important was the chance and right to debate about the extents of reforms. To the better management of economy only, or the governance as well? And how? For example, the alleged representatives of the people in a pseudo-parliaments and councils of all levels, – alleged, because never elected but appointed by Communist party, – should become **true deputies** being elected in a competitive elections. That meant, "we the people" were to say a word about, and it should be counted.

Finally or in consequence, the people as the proprietor of national sovereignty should be asked either willing to ask ourselves, to what extent would they wish to use their sovereignty rights.

The right as such and the political space of implementation of it were two different things. We realized and took the stance that to state and take what is ours should be a point of a fundamental priority, while the implementation depends not on ourselves only. But to challenge what is an opportunity in a reality, you should make the first sovereign step.

"Lithuania is an independent state again, and this Supreme Council from that day begins to implement the all state sovereignty", it was an act of a state restitution, as adopted 11th of March 1990, by freely elected Parliament of Lithuania using the mandate given by the sovereign nation.

The case of Lithuania caused a lot of storm in a politology and real politics, in speculations and comparisons. Our adversaries, Lithuanian Communist party losing the grounds, became spiteful; more progressive part of them went inventing tricky formulas as "sovereignty inside of Soviet Union", "economical sovereignty", "no sovereignty [inside?] – no future", carefully avoiding the word "independence".

That last status, in an effort to get it via repeated self determination of our nation, should become a trap as well. The times were different from those after the World War I, followed then by dissolution of three European empires: Germany, Austria and Russia. No, after the Cold War the alleged contradiction between self-determination of nations and integrity of existing states, was and is debated seriously. We did not want to waste the time and opportunity for such debates and went the way of **state continuity** (in line with, a sovereignty of nation which does continue even in captivity) – the lawful continuity of the Republic of Lithuania, well recognized former member of the League of Nations etc., now standing up as the Phoenix from his own ashes and going to acquire its rightful place in a community of free nations.

That was our stance when Soviets loudly promoted their own: Lithuanians had no right to act unilaterally, without a consent of USSR, they are anti-constitutional insurgents, troublemakers and should be called to an order. Fortunately, that brutal stance was not supported by Western democracies. In turn, their position was positive, but rather cautious and dubious. – Well, Lithuanians have the right to be independent as until the war, and their annexation remains unrecognized by true democracies, only the outcome is to be negotiated between them and Soviets. That would mean – endlessly... God bless, nobody stated that we are violators of Soviet sovereignty to our soil and space, or that we must obey the rules established by Moscow. No, but the general vision of the circle of world dignitaries observing the competition between huge, bullying street hooligan and a boy inside of that circle, was perfect item for political cartoons.

Our captivity was a special, indeed, and our path of political constitutional struggle denouncing in principle any means of riot or subversive violence, was very special as well, never used in Europe before. "For freedom of yours and ours!" – we used that slogan of Lithuanian and Polish insurgents of 19th century, despite being not insurgents or, at least, only on moral level.

It helped us to resist every blame and slander distributed internationally by Mr. Kremlin, and they lost, especially after the Soviet massacre in Vilnius, January 1991, all chances to win the psychological and propaganda war against Lithuania. Even the real disintegration of huge Soviet prison of nations was welcomed, finally. Only Mr. Putin came lamenting that "greatest tragedy for a mankind" several years later.

KGB as a mankind, it should be too much, anyway.

I can not comment and will not follow, how the constituent Soviet republics decided to dissolve the false Union, or how the nations of smaller red empire – Yugoslavia led by Serbian communists and nationalists – went to fall apart by single decisions similar to that Lithuanian example.

Was the concept of sovereignty used there or not – either as the right gained with independence or regained as a legacy to implement again – I can not say for sure. Let the researchers make their work first. What I observed later as a politician, that that strive for independence in Kosovo or Chechnya was objected by the argument of **state integrity** (Serbia or Russia), that latter being reasonably denounced in turn by facts of **genocide** (no suzerain may retain in its "sovereignty" over the people treated this way), and finally, integrity did not prevail for Kosovo, but served for the most terrible cleansings and destruction of entire Chechnya. Dual standards, of course, and the reasons for such unfortunate reality show are well known. Serbia, ladies and gentlemen, is less threatening of Russia.

At the other cases, when the claims of possible independence for smaller entities inside of greater nations go arising, and those smaller are not subjected to oppression or genocide, I do suppose, the problem should be debated rather in terms not of rights, but reasons.