
Interview: Jonas Birziskis

Our transition from the socialist system

Mr. Birziskis is the Lithuanian minister of transport. He was interviewed by Renate Rumpf on Oct. 30, during the Pan-European Transport Conference in Prague.

EIR: How do you view developments since the independence of the Baltic states, especially the transport cooperation of your country with the other European countries?

Birziskis: . . . We have a problem. We are going from the administrative system to the market system, along with the ex-socialist countries Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. . . . The problem is how to join the European transport system. We can join the system only with the first steps. . . .



The other problem is that we still have very close economic ties to the Soviet Union, and those ties have to be loosened.

EIR: How is the cooperation between your country and our European politicians?

Birziskis: Relations and contact with Europe will systematically improve. There are two sides of our relations: interstate relations and business relations. Iceland and Denmark were the first to recognize our independence and were not afraid of such contacts. Since August, we have received some good specialized support from the West on how to organize our ruling structures and so on. The main support, political support, was from the Scandinavian countries. . . .

EIR: This conference is for me quite an interesting step forward in planning a new system. What do you think?

Birziskis: It depends on how you look at this problem. This conference is not so useful on concrete matters, but . . . we are preparing a new program today, for the future, which means it is useful for us. It will be interesting for you to hear that some of the representatives from the Soviet Union are finding out for themselves here that we are a separate state and that our transport system is also a separate system. . . .

Interview: Janis Janovskis

Latvia to boost ties with Europe

Mr. Janovskis is the minister of transport of Latvia. He was interviewed by Renate Rumpf on Oct. 30, at the Pan-European Transport Conference in Prague.

EIR: How do you see the future for your country, and your collaboration with other western countries, especially the northern countries?

Janovskis: We are looking to the future with hope, and we think it is very important to join in international cooperation. It is important to join international organizations and adopt international conventions in transport, because then we will be able to solve our transport problems more efficiently. . . . I hope we will reach an agreement with other transport ministers in creating groups of experts for evaluation of our transport system. We have very good contact already with Danish, Swedish, and Finnish transport ministers, and we will soon start with bilateral agreements with the German transport minister too. In November we will meet the Danish transport minister in Latvia. We have had cooperation from that country, and we hope to be able to sign agreements during this next meeting. We have already implemented some projects in specialist training with Swedish and Danish institutions, where the ministers have helped us. . . .

EIR: What can you tell us about the recent political developments in the Baltic states?

Janovskis: In our country, we are now in a period of intensive work. We have to spend all our effort to consolidate our independence. We have a lot to do, in particularly in putting our economy in order, according to our standard today. We are now working out the privatization process. We have to work very seriously on legislation and introducing the [European] Community. That would be the main objective for our Parliament.

I would like to address the problems of our domestic currency, which we are going to introduce. The situation is bad, because our currency is not convertible, and we are not able to operate in other countries. I think that another very important point is that we, as newly independent republics, are working together and trying to intensify the relations among us. We are for an honest partnership among us, which will be based on trust. . . .