

Baltic resistance defies Moscow threats

Moscow officialdom has reacted to the extraordinary resistance to Soviet rule in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania on the 50th anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, by putting out the line that any proposal to change the borders that incorporated those three Baltic Republics into the Soviet Union will be considered a *casus belli*.

On the eve of Aug. 23, the anniversary date, 2 million demonstrators linked arms in a line starting in the Latvian capital of Riga and extending in either direction to the capitals of neighboring Estonia and Lithuania in protest against that pact, whose secret codicils ceded the Baltic States to the Soviet Union. (Text, page 45.)

In Riga, men, women, and children sang the Latvian national anthem, then stood peacefully for 15 minutes with arms linked. In Lithuania, more than 1 million joined the chain or attended other meetings. Estonian television said some 700,000 joined the Estonian section with another 200,000 or so watching. A spokeswoman for the Latvian Popular Front said many more than the 200,000 people needed had come forward to fill the Latvian part of the chain. Church bells rang out across the Baltic republics as the crowds gathered to form the human chain across more than 375 miles. "Soviet policy here is simply that of a colonial power," said Janis Jurkens, a spokesman for the Latvian Popular Front.

Moscow defends pact with Hitler

While the Baltic demonstrations were peaceful, special riot police in black berets broke up similar demonstrations by the one hundred thousand people in Pushkin Square in Moscow waving the flags of the Baltic republics.

In a statement published in *Izvestia* Aug. 21, just prior to the protests, Valentin Falin, head of the Central Committee International Department, warned that the post-World War II boundaries in Europe could not be withdrawn without bringing on World War III.

"Present the Soviet-German non-aggression pact as a collusion of two aggressors to divide Europe into spheres of influence, and the shadow will be cast on the legality of the territorial structure in Eastern Europe," wrote Falin. "This is precisely the destabilizing effect that some would like to achieve. If the striving to divide what cannot be divided continues, which was characteristic of the period before the previous two world wars, if lands and frontiers are being recarved while the life and safety of peoples is neglected, the worst and this time the final disaster will be brought on."

Falin covered up Stalin's well-documented aggressive intentions in signing the pact with Hitler, by reiterating the standard Soviet litany that by August 1939, Russia had been pushed into "total isolation" by the Western powers, who had "supported Hitler" consistently from 1933 to 1939, "as a good anti-communist," and who "did nothing" and "said nothing" about Hitler's persecution of the Jews and "democratic political opponents." He declared that the West from 1933 to 1939 "rejected all Soviet offers to form a system of collective security" against Nazi Germany, and "did nothing," and actually supported Hitler's conquests of Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia. Falin also said that for all the noise the West made about the Nazi invasion of Poland, no concrete military action was taken.

Pravda on Aug. 23 delivered a scathing blast against the Lithuanian popular front organization, called Sajudis. Using the identical format employed 10 days earlier against the Estonian Popular Front, *Pravda* declared that "extremist tendencies have begun to appear in Sajudis . . . contradicting its original support for *perestroika*," adding menacingly that "this could lead to a crisis."

Some Western *perestroika* boosters seem to agree. The London *Guardian* editorialized on Aug. 24 that the process of change in the Baltic "could become dangerous. . . . The idea of tampering with the physical borders is not only unrealistic but undesirable."

Glasnost or no *glasnost*, the Soviet military is sticking with the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact. In an interview Aug. 23 in the Soviet trade union newspaper *Trud*, by Gen. Maj. Yuri Kirshin, deputy head of the Defense Ministry's Institute of Military History under the General Staff, defended the Pact as follows: 1) "By the spring of 1939, fascist Germany had decided to invade Poland," therefore "it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to restrict German penetration to the East." 2) Under Article I, "German troops couldn't enter Latvia, Estonia or Finland (and later, Lithuania). That was important for us, and in the interest of the people of the Baltic republics as well." 3) In Poland, "German troops could not advance farther than the rivers Narev, Vistula, and San." 4) "The Soviet Union was legitimately interested in recovering the territory (formerly part of the Russian Empire) it had lost." 5) "The Soviet Union stressed its interest in Bessarabia [now the Moldavian S.S.R.]. . . . Late 1917-early 1918, Romania had seized Bessarabia from the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union never recognized this as legitimate, so this too was in our interest."

Kirshin summarized the Pact's benefits for the U.S.S.R.: 1) "It put a barrier in the way of German aggression in the East of several hundred kilometers"; 2) "The Soviet Union was left in peace to build up its defense potential"; 3) "The Pact worsened relations between Germany and Japan considerably." Kirshin's one major criticism: "Our political-military leaders made a mistake in believing that the Pact would last a longer time."