

Lithuania blames West's cowardice for crisis

by Konstantin George

The first critical test for independent Lithuania will occur before the end of March, when Moscow will make the fateful decision about how far to go in using outright military force to crush the independent Baltic nation. Politically speaking, the military intervention, defined as using the military to force an independent nation to surrender its independence, began on March 23.

By the evening of Friday, March 23, the stage was set for Soviet occupation troops in Lithuania, moving over the weekend, to remove independent Lithuania's government and parliament. Soviet tanks and armored personnel carriers had moved into Lithuania's capital, Vilnius; combat helicopters were circling over the parliament as it was beginning an all-night crisis session. Squadrons of helicopters were dropping hundreds of thousands of leaflets over the country, carrying the texts of Gorbachov's decrees and ultimatums against Free Lithuania. Early that evening, the Soviet Foreign Ministry ordered all foreign correspondents, diplomats, and travelers to leave Lithuania. All day long, Lithuania's President, Vytautas Landsbergis and the Lithuanian Parliament were issuing dramatic appeals to the nations of the West to help, before it would be too late. Landsbergis stressed that all day long, Soviet troop reinforcements were being flown in to Lithuania.

On March 23, timed with the Army deployments inside Lithuania, the Soviet media broadcast two Big Lies: 1) that Lithuanian independence had been decided by a parliament and not by "the people in a referendum," i.e., that the parliament had acted "against the will of the people," and, 2) as stated by Valentin Falin, head of the Soviet Central Committee International Department, that the parliament was elected in an election where "vote fraud" had occurred.

The extreme gravity of the crisis was underscored in the last interview given by President Landsbergis to Western

television before the correspondents were expelled. This was to Danish TV, aired at 7 p.m. Danish time, March 23. Landsbergis blamed the cowardice of the Western governments for giving Moscow, and specifically Gorbachov, the free hand to crush Lithuania:

"The Danish government, and the other governments of the West, know that Gorbachov's deadline is March 24, and after that he will act. The West will give its usual show of pity and say the Soviet Union acted wrong, and we will just be put into the pile of small nations gobbled up by the Soviet empire."

The stage for this crisis was set in a series of decrees issued March 21-22 by President-dictator Mikhail Gorbachov and Gen. Col. Fyodor Kuzmin, Commander of the Baltic Military District. These began with a March 21 presidential decree to "safeguard the rights of [sic] Soviet citizens," to "protect the borders" of Lithuania, for which purpose elite KGB Border Guards units have been deployed, and for a "ban on the sale of all firearms" in Lithuania, stipulating that Lithuanians have "seven days" to surrender all firearms in private possession. A similar deadline was given for all Lithuanian Army "deserters," and those who have refused to answer draft call-ups, to surrender or else the Russian Army will round them up. The pressure was escalated the next day with a second Gorbachov decree, setting a March 24 deadline, the one cited by Landsbergis on Danish TV, for the "dissolution" of Lithuania's volunteer citizen militia, and the surrender of its arms.

The Lithuanian President, speaking on March 22, had already denounced Gorbachov's first decree as having "no legal validity" for independent Lithuania, saying that "the ghost of Stalinism is running the Kremlin, casting its long shadow westward . . . the Soviet Union is unable to release its prey," illegally seized in 1940.

With this decree, Gorbachov's "Ukase Number One," the option to employ the Army was created, under the outrageously phony pretext that it must "confiscate weapons" to "prevent violence." Gorbachov made his move, emboldened by the West's refusal, beginning with President Bush and Prime Minister Thatcher, to recognize Lithuania's independence. Gorbachov also has on record Bush's statement that the United States supports the "territorial integrity" of the Soviet Union, and Bush's endorsement of Gorbachov's military intervention in Azerbaijan in January, where Moscow's line that it was necessary to "stop violence" was parroted in Washington. On March 22, one day after "Ukase Number One," the U.S. Senate voted 59-36 to reject a resolution sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to call on Bush to recognize independent Lithuania.

Lithuanian 'crisis': made in Moscow

There is no crisis in Lithuania itself, not even a remote parallel to previous situations in Karabakh and Azerbaijan in the Transcaucasus. Inside Lithuania, industries, offices, and farms are working as they always have; schools and universities, transport, and port activities are all operating normally. There has not been even one solitary instance of riots, disorders, or violence of any type. Since Lithuania proclaimed independence on March 11, the only case of illegal use of firearms was by a drunken Russian Army officer who stole a car and opened fire on police, causing a shootout in which he was wounded. So much for the "reasons" peddled by Czar Gorbachov for Ukase Number One.

The reasons behind Moscow's brutal intimidation campaign against Lithuania have nothing to do with "preventing violence," or "restoring order." Moscow, from its imperial standpoint, must terminate Lithuania's independence, because independent Lithuania serves as a beacon for the independence aspirations of all the other Captive Nations inside the U.S.S.R.

Parallel to the campaign against Lithuania, Gorbachov embarked on a campaign of intimidation coupled with concessions against the other two Baltic republics, Estonia and Latvia, designed to ensure that no other republic follow Lithuania in proclaiming independence. On March 20, two days after the elections in Latvia and Estonia, an Estonian delegation led by Estonian President Arnold Ruutel and Prime Minister Indrek Toome was summoned to Moscow for a three-hour meeting with Gorbachov. Gorbachov warned them that "the path chosen by Lithuania leads to a dead end," and offered Estonia "a new federation based on a new Treaty of Union between the republics," where Estonia and Latvia would be granted "maximum" domestic sovereignty, with "a special relation for the Baltic states as in the time of the Czars."

One day later, the Latvian leadership was called in and given the same ultimatum to accept the "autonomy" formula, leading to eventual independence over five years, under the

"new legal mechanism" for the secession of a republic, now being drafted by the Supreme Soviet.

Territorial questions

What made the pro-independence leaders of Estonia and Latvia do a *volte-face* from their previous commitment to independence now, and decide to choose the "safe" path to eventual independence, giving Gorbachov badly needed time? It was not Gorbachov's tough warnings as such. Talk is cheap, even in the form of verbal threats from a Russian "Czar." Gorbachov, as well-informed Baltic sources told *EIR*, made threats based on Russian operational capabilities, exploiting the existence of huge Russian populations, 39% and 50% respectively, in Estonia and Latvia.

Even though the Russian chauvinist organization, Interfront, did not gain a majority of the Slavic vote in these republics' elections on March 18 (see p. 48), it does have enough strength to mobilize enough of the Russians to destabilize any post-independence regime. In effect, Gorbachov threatened a combination of inter-ethnic civil war and territorial dismemberment along ethnic lines, which would not only truncate Estonia and Latvia, but given the urban preponderance of the Russian population, deprive them of their historic capitals, namely Tallinn and Riga.

What thuggery Moscow is capable of was already shown in the March 18 elections, the most detailed account of which is available from Estonia. In Estonia, the 200,000 Soviet troops who occupy the republic were marched, under Soviet "law" (where soldiers vote based not on their home town, but on the region where they are stationed on the date of an election), right into to the polls to vote for Interfront. As a result, Interfront won not the 18 seats it would have gotten from its minority constituency among the civilian Russians, but a total of 30 seats, thus giving it the power to block laws changing Estonia's constitution. Though the details are still murky, according to Baltic sources, the same thing happened in Latvia. Thus, for the historical record, the first Soviet military intervention in the Baltic under Gorbachov occurred on March 18.

The potential for another early declaration of independence, in the Transcaucasian republic of Georgia, evaporated on March 21, when an accord was reached between Moscow, the Georgian authorities, and the republic's pro-independence opposition parties, to postpone elections from March 25 until November. Georgia's nationalist parties had been requesting such a postponement to give them time to organize their forces and wage an effective campaign, confident that by the autumn they could win a majority. Moscow, anxious to stop any post-Lithuania independence chain reaction, gladly agreed.

The main focus of Soviet intimidation against Lithuania has been Gorbachov's demands for territorial and military basing rights as the minimal price for achieving independence. Lithuanian sources confirm that Moscow has raised

the following territorial demands:

1) Surrender by Lithuania of its eastern districts, including the capital Vilnius and the surrounding region, under the "legal" argument that these areas did not belong to the pre-war independent Lithuanian Republic, having been part of Poland. Moscow has told Landsbergis that it views these areas as having been part of "Polish-occupied Belorussia," implying that they be ceded to Soviet Belorussia.

2) Granting to the U.S.S.R. of a Danzig-type corridor (a reference to Hitler's 1939 demand that Poland cede to Nazi Germany a "corridor" connecting German Pomerania, via Danzig, to German East Prussia, which after the 1919 Versailles Treaty had been separated by the "Polish Corridor" from the rest of Germany), connecting Soviet Belorussia with the Russian Republic's enclave formed by Soviet-occupied East Prussia (the Kaliningrad, formerly Königsberg, region).

3) Cession to the Russian Republic of the port of Klaipeda (Memel) and the coastal strip extending from it down to Soviet-occupied East Prussia.

The first two demands are viewed by the Lithuanian leadership as very serious, while (rightly or wrongly) they consider the Klaipeda demand a "bargaining chip." To add to the pressure, the Russian chauvinist organization, Yedintsvo (Unity) staged demonstrations in Klaipeda March 14 demanding that it join the Russian Federation. Lithuania's President Landsbergis has employed a statesmanlike policy of not provoking Moscow. He has offered, privately, to accommodate legitimate Soviet state interests—for example, that Soviet East Prussia not be cut off from the Soviet "mainland." He offered ground and air passageways, in the form of transit routes, modeled on the links maintained between West Germany and West Berlin, but under no conditions will he grant Moscow a territorial "corridor."

Beyond these territorial demands, Russia has stated it will not withdraw its occupation forces, and demands that military basing rights, especially for its key bases, be accorded. This means above all, the huge Soviet Air Base at Siauliai, in north-central Lithuania, the biggest Soviet military concentration in the republic, and one of the U.S.S.R.'s most important Western Theater air bases.

Documentation

U.S. must recognize independent Lithuania

From a March 13 statement by Lyndon LaRouche, Democratic congressional candidate for the 10th District of Virginia:

The fact of the matter is that Lithuania was gobbled up by the Soviet empire as a result of an August 1939 treaty with Hitler, called the Hitler-Stalin Pact; that up until recently the United States never recognized the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as being properly part of Soviet territory. Now, in the course of events, Lithuania, as the largest and, thus, flagship nation of the so-called Baltic states, has declared its autonomy, and, in an orderly fashion, has announced to the Soviet government the declaration of its independence and its desire to deal immediately with the Soviet government in Moscow in formalizing its independence.

It has also asked, in a democratic vote by its population and its parliament, that Western nations begin to recognize the sovereign independence of the state of Lithuania.

Up until a few years ago, U.S. recognition of Lithuania would have gone without question. But now, under leadership of Margaret Thatcher's Britain, we are waffling. Hungary has taken the lead in moving toward recognition of Lithuania's independence. Other nations, including Vaclav Havel's Czechoslovakia, and Poland, have moved in a similar direc-

tion. We must also.

Now, how does this bear on Gorbachov, ostensibly the incoming President of the Soviet Union, the President with dictatorial powers greater than those perhaps of any czar after Ivan Grozny, the so-called Ivan the Terrible? Well, Moscow is screaming, saying this is the internal integrity of Soviet territory, the core empire. Well, it's not the core empire. It never really was Soviet territory in a moral sense, even by Stalin's definition of nationality. Each of the Baltic states is an independent nationality, even by all of Stalin's criteria.

The issue here is twofold: There is a cultural division within Europe between those states which in 1439-40 joined the Paleologue emperor of Constantinople in a great Christian reconciliation called the Council of Florence. This reconciliation defines Western Christian civilization, which extends into Ukraine, for example. It includes most emphatically the Poles. It includes the people of the Baltic states. In opposition to this 1439-40 reconciliation were included the Russian Orthodox Church of the princes of Muscovy, under which, later, the Great Russians became the dominant force, the conquering force, subjugating the Ukrainians and others, particularly so in the wake of the long-term subjugation by the communists.

Thus, there is a cultural division between the Great Rus-