

Lithuanian independence requires Western support

by Konstantin George

Lithuania's March 11 Declaration of Independence and election of Sajudis (Lithuanian Popular Front) chairman Vytautas Landsbergis as President of the first Captive Nation of the U.S.S.R. to declare itself free of Bolshevik despotism, is an historic occasion and inspiration for freedom-fighters the world over. The independence proclamation, creating the sovereign Republic of Lithuania, and restoring the 1938 Constitution of pre-war independent Lithuania, was timed with a sharp eye on the political calendar in the Russian empire's capital, Moscow. It was also taken with no illusions regarding the vast difference between proclaiming independence and actually achieving it.

How tough that road to genuine independence will be was soon made plain. While the Lithuanians were celebrating their freedom, following a litany of threats against Lithuania by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov, a new autocratic dictatorship was being installed in Moscow. On March 14, as expected, the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies confirmed Gorbachov as President-Dictator of the U.S.S.R., in effect crowning him as "Czar" Mikhail. Gorbachov's last policy statement before being elected was a rude rejection of Lithuania's demand for negotiations with Moscow to have its independence duly recognized and respected:

"I believe this decision was illegitimate and invalid. Lithuanians, along with representatives of Estonia and Latvia, have asked to hold talks. There can be no question of talks. We hold talks only with foreign states."

The two events, Lithuania proclaiming independence, and Gorbachov enthroned as "Czar"-autocrat, epitomize the two primary political dynamics under way in the crisis-racked Soviet Union: the tendency of republics seeking freedom and independence, and a Moscow state leadership committed to preventing the empire's dissolution at all costs. The crisis manifestations inside the U.S.S.R. to date, dra-

matic as they may have been, were only an overture to the next phase.

As Gorbachov admitted in his statement rejecting talks, Lithuania's independence has created a precedent and has given hope to all the other Captive Nations in the Russian empire to follow Lithuania's example, beginning with Lithuania's fellow Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia, which like Lithuania were illegally annexed to the U.S.S.R. in 1940 under the terms of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The abrogation of the 1940 Soviet annexation formed the prelude to the historic Lithuanian Declaration of Independence, read aloud over Lithuanian television and radio: "The Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing the will of the people, has resolved that its exercise of sovereign powers, which had been curtailed by foreign powers [Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia] in 1940, has been restored."

This was followed by Landsbergis, the republic's President, declaring, "We are standing at the threshold of an historic turnaround. . . . It's a question of a free Lithuania, a free people, on a free soil."

Independence wave

On the weekend when Lithuanian independence was declared, 499 delegates, members of the Estonian National Congress, convened in that republic's capital of Tallinn, and proclaimed Estonia independent. These delegates had been duly chosen by 700,000 Estonians in an Estonians-only election (due to Soviet postwar migration policies, 40% of Estonia's population today are non-Estonians, primarily Russians) held on Feb. 24, the anniversary of Estonia's 1918 Declaration of Independence. Estonia's Supreme Soviet elections will be held on March 18, and as the above events show, a majority mandate for Estonia to follow Lithuania and proclaim independence is certain.

A mass movement for proclaiming independence has swept the Transcaucasian republic of Georgia during March. On March 9, the Georgian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution calling for negotiations with Moscow to work out the details of Georgian independence. In Ukraine, the largest non-Russian republic, the Ukrainian National Movement, Rukh, following its large vote in the March 4 elections, announced it will convene to work out a platform for Ukrainian independence.

War of independence has just begun

Lithuania's Independence Declaration was followed on the same day by the Lithuanian Parliament's issuing a dramatic appeal to all nations of the world to extend support and recognition. The response to the appeal has demonstrated once again the moral bankruptcy of most Western governments, above all the Anglo-American side.

At a March 13 press conference, President George Bush stated that the United States would not yet recognize Lithuania, even though the U.S.A., at least on paper, has never recognized Moscow's 1940 annexation of the Baltic states. Bush being Bush, the point was made with rather incoherent phrases. Question: "Why are you unwilling to recognize Lithuania as independent?" Answer: "There is a standard of control of one's territory that we are—I've been advised is—should guide this. We want to see a peaceful resolution to this question."

The British government issued an identical response, albeit more crisply, in this case by William Waldegrave, Minister of State at the Foreign Office: "When it comes to recognition of states, the state has to be an existing viable state under our criteria, with control over its external policy and control over its territory. I think, as of today, we would probably have to say, 'No' . . . it isn't yet a genuine, separate state."

Such policy statements place the cart before the horse—out of an undisguised desire to propitiate Gorbachov. With Western recognition and support, Lithuania will become in no time a "viable, genuine, separate state." Denial of such support threatens to create a self-fulfilling prophecy that the infant republic will not prove "viable."

In the first days of its independence, no state, including from Western or Eastern Europe, has extended recognition or real support to Lithuania. The nation is totally dependent on the U.S.S.R. for its supply of energy and raw materials; it remains occupied by Soviet troops. It stands exposed to an entire gamut of Soviet economic warfare and territorial demands, designed to bring Lithuania, over a period of time, to its knees.

Memel, East Prussia, Vilnius

Moscow's threats of economic warfare, up to blockade, plus the raising of territorial questions, were already issued before Lithuania proclaimed independence. As was revealed in the Lithuanian media, Gorbachov told Lithuanian repre-

sentatives in a Moscow meeting March 6 that an "independent" Lithuania would have to cede to the Soviet Union a strip of territory that connects Soviet Belorussia with the Russian Republic exclave, formed by Soviet-occupied East Prussia (the region around Kaliningrad, formerly Königsberg); and "clarify" the status of the following territories: 1) Lithuania's capital Vilnius and the surrounding region; 2) Lithuania's coastal strip extending north from Soviet-occupied East Prussia to Lithuania's sole port, Klaipeda, the former Memel. This strip of territory was known historically as Memelland, and until 1940, a region of mixed Lithuanian-German population.

Gorbachov employed the following legal fiction to justify Soviet moves to cripple independent Lithuania: 1) Since Lithuania was restoring its pre-war independence, its maximal boundaries would be those of pre-war Lithuania. Pre-war Lithuania did not include Vilnius, its present capital. Before the war, the Vilnius region had been under Polish rule. 2) Under the terms of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Memelland was detached from Lithuania and awarded to Nazi Germany, and therefore was not part of the independent Lithuania seized by Stalin in 1940, but was "restored" to Lithuania in 1945 by a Moscow act of alleged "generosity," rather than remaining part of Soviet-occupied East Prussia, and thus ending up in the Russian Federation.

These legal fictions are being employed now not only with the aim of strangling Lithuania, but in order to consolidate the most important region of the Soviet military's western theater existing anywhere in the western Soviet Union.

The most important piece of military-strategic real estate for Moscow in the Baltic, containing the largest Soviet military concentrations in the Baltic Military District, is not any of the three Baltic republics, but the Russian Republic enclave formed by the part of former German East Prussia occupied by the Soviet Union after World War II. This small geographic area borders on Poland and lies the closest to what is now the German Democratic Republic—East Germany—of any part of the U.S.S.R. It contains the largest single army in the Soviet military's order of battle, the 11th Guards Army, which, unique to any Soviet army, contains two artillery divisions, an incredible concentration of artillery and short-range missile firepower. Soviet-occupied East Prussia also contains the former German port of Pillau, the headquarters and main naval base for the Soviet Baltic Fleet. Beyond that, Soviet forces in this region are being quietly built up through the transfer of units now being withdrawn from Eastern Europe.

Moscow's territorial demands on Lithuania have an importance extending far beyond Lithuania. Soviet-occupied East Prussia, with the addition of the "corridor" connecting it to Belorussia and the Klaipeda (Memel) strip, is on its way to becoming Moscow's springboard for any future military operations or power projection blackmail westward, against Germany, in the context of Central European demilitariza-

tion. Gorbachov's demand that Memelland be added to this springboard is critical to maximizing the springboard's logistical capabilities, in addition to the economic and political devastation it would wreak on Lithuania by depriving it of its only port and hence, physical access to the Western world.

The port of Klaipeda (Memel), as *EIR* had documented in its 1985 *Global Showdown* special report, was vastly expanded during the 1980s, to become the key rail ferry logistics port for Soviet forces operating in Central Europe.

'Trojan Horse' Brazauskas

By March 15, the next level of Moscow's counter-offensive had surfaced: the activation of the numerically strong Russian minority in the Baltic republics, to march in opposition to independence, and the activation of Baltic Communist "Trojan Horses," who have pretended to be for independence, but whose true colors are now emerging.

The activation of the Russian ethnics began on March 15 in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, where thousands of Russians demonstrated, preemptively, before the March 18 Estonian elections, against Estonia following Lithuania's road. This is only the prelude to events that will show that Estonia's road will be even harder than Lithuania's. Lithuanians comprise 80% of their republic's population, whereas Estonians make up only some 60% of their republic's population. In Latvia, matters are worst. Latvians form at most 50% of the population. Political freedom in no way is a threat to the well-being of these ethnic minorities—but the Soviet KGB has busied itself in convincing them that it is, and is mobilizing them to oppose independence from Moscow.

In tandem, on March 15, Algirdas Brazauskas, the head of Lithuania's "independent" Communist Party, who had profiled himself and his party as "pro-independence" during the election campaign to secure Sajudis support and thus get some 40 "pro-independence" Communists elected to the Lithuanian Parliament, exposed himself as a Moscow Trojan Horse inside the Lithuanian Independence camp. Radio Moscow announced, with hardly concealed glee, that "the Lithuanian Parliament is split" between Sajudis and "their leader, Landsbergis on the one side," and "Brazauskas and the Lithuanian Communist Party on the other side." Brazauskas and the CP are using what he has termed in post-independence broadcasts, "the economic consequences of independence," to argue for a pullback from full independence, to negotiate with Moscow Lithuania's receiving "complete domestic independence," but remain tied in foreign and defense policy to the Soviet Federation.

Economic warfare has already begun to hit the republic. Moscow has slowed down deliveries of components and parts, and enterprises in Lithuania are feeling the pinch. Shortages are growing. On March 17, demonstrations by non-Lithuanian minorities (Russians and Poles) against independence will be held in Vilnius. A state of siege has begun. The nations of the West, including the nations of Eastern

Europe such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, which historically and culturally belong to the West, must recognize the Republic of Lithuania and come to its assistance.

What happens next concerning Lithuania is an open question. Moscow may even succeed in temporarily ending Lithuanian independence. However, the courageous act by that proud Baltic people, seeking to rejoin the Europe to which they belong, historically and culturally, has unleashed a tidal wave moving toward freedom and independence in Moscow's entire prison of Captive Nations.

Documentation

LaRouche challenges Moscow's intentions

In a commentary issued March 13, U.S. congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche advised, "We must say [to Lithuania], 'You have every right to assert your sovereign independence, because you have all the reasons for separating yourself from the Great Russians. . . ."

"Now, let me just take one little sticking point which reveals the whole issue. There's a strip of Lithuania, which is associated with the city of Memel. Now, the Lithuanians naturally would be inclined to say, 'Well, give us back this part of our territory, as part of our independent territory.' The Soviets have already said in advance, 'No.' What's the significance of Memel . . . to Moscow? It has only one significance. It is the crucial strategic point for launching a surprise attack on not only Poland, but parts of a united Germany, up to the city of Kiel in Schleswig-Holstein. . . ."

"Therefore, if the Russians are so determined, the Muscovites, to hold onto Lithuania, and particularly Memel as distinct from the rest of Lithuania, we must . . . say, 'Dear Czar Mikhail V of all the Russias: If you grant the Baltic states independence, as they may desire it, that will not hurt the Russians, that will help them in our eyes and you shall gain more by giving the Balts their freedom than you shall by trying to continue to hold them as your slaves and vassals. Because you will have better relations with us, the Baltic region itself will become economically better, much better, and rapidly, than it was or could be under your domination, and you will benefit from having a progressive state on your borders which represents no military threat whatsoever to you. Whereas, if you insist on owning this territory, then we cannot believe a thing you say about all your great humanistic reforms. And if you insist on holding Memel, then we know that aggressive war is lurking somewhere in the halls of the Kremlin.' "