

## 'Another Munich': Bush policy on Lithuania

by William Jones

In his most abject act of bootlicking the Kremlin dictators to date, President George Bush decided to do nothing to pressure the Soviet Union to cease its attempts to economically strangle the Republic of Lithuania. As Moscow boss Mikhail Gorbachov began to impose a total blockade on Lithuania, shutting off oil and gas supplies, the White House sent out signals that it was weighing "appropriate measures" if the Soviets continued with their boycott. President Bush met with members of the National Security Council on April 23, and the media began to spin the yarn that Bush was preparing some form of sanctions.

When interviewed on April 22 on ABC's *This Week* with David Brinkley, Speaker of the House Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) and Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) voiced bipartisan agreement that negotiations for expanded trade and credits with the U. S. S. R. ought to be taken off the agenda of the next summit. Dole noted CIA reports on the grave ills of the Soviet economy (see p. 64), and he said that such measures could really hurt the Soviets. The White House, however, responded "no comment" on whether there would be a trade agreement at the next summit.

### Soviets tighten the noose

Meanwhile, Moscow's thuggery has escalated against Lithuania, a country which was annexed to the U.S.S.R. under the Hitler-Stalin Pact and has never even been recognized by the U. S. as part of the Soviet Union. On April 23, Gorbachov's military adviser Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev warned that "if Lithuanian separatists break the law, then we will take measures to enforce the law. I'm not afraid of using force if necessary." Already on April 21, Soviet paratroopers took over the printing plant in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, and seriously injured several people, including a parliamentarian trying to calm things down.

As a total blockade was gradually imposed on Lithuania, to force revocation of the March 11 Declaration of Indepen-

dence, the temperature began to rise in the United States. Yet on April 24, after conferring with European allies and congressional leaders, President Bush announced that he would take no steps whatsoever to pressure the Soviets to back off from Lithuania.

The Capitol Hill lawmakers at the White House meeting, who, like Rep. Dante Fascell (D-Fla.), had been demanding sanctions against the Soviets, came out of the meeting with the President bleating like lambs. "There is not any action that I believe at this point could be taken which would be a constructive one in the way of sanctions or other activity," said Fascell. Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, praised Bush for "recognizing that if the situation is escalated it could be of mutual damage." Sen. George Mitchell (D-Me.) commended the President for his "care and prudence." "Prudence"—a word which President Bush uses often to describe his general outlook, and now his refusal to impose sanctions—has become synonymous with "cowardice" during this administration.

### Munich replay

It seems that the "toughness" Bush found in abundance when it comes to invading tiny Panama, is in short supply when it came to confronting Moscow. It was the second time in two weeks that President Bush had drawn the line in the sand, saying that the Soviets should not overstep it, and then backed down. Even after the latest refusal to act, the administration continued whining that "more measures, or intensification of measures by the Soviets, failure of any dialogue to emerge, these would be considerations" for possible reprisals.

Administration officials on April 25 said that President Bush feared that taking action against Moscow could hinder German unification and the Soviet military withdrawal from Eastern Europe. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said that the United States had been encouraged by signs of "flexibility" in recent Soviet statements and that Mr. Bush did

not want to interfere with arms control talks or the schedule for the next Soviet-American summit.

President Vytautas Landsbergis called Bush's retreat "another Munich," referring to the infamous 1938 agreement at Munich between British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler, in which Czechoslovakia was given to Hitler without a fight for the sake of "peace in our time." "We feared that America might sell us out," said Landsbergis. "Let the people decide whether that has happened. . . . I don't understand whether it is possible to sell the freedom of one group of people for the freedom of another. If that is so, then of what value is the idea of freedom itself?"

"I don't need any defense," said President Bush, obviously nervous over the comparison with Neville Chamberlain, whose actions made World War II inevitable. "The policy decisions I have taken have support from the American people. That's who I work for," he went on, claiming that recent polls showed that the American people were less concerned about the fate of Lithuania than about protecting Gorbachov's hide. "The Lithuanians know our position, and Mr. Landsbergis is fully aware of the President's concern and interest in freedom in his country," blustered press spokesman Marlin Fitzwater. In fact, Bush had refused to even answer the letter President Landsbergis had sent him appealing for support from the United States (see *EIR*, April 27, p. 30).

The *New York Times*, speaking for the same Liberal Establishment that dictates White House policy, had the gall to blame the Lithuanians for their troubles, in an editorial "The Bush Message to Vilnius: Talk." President Landsbergis had refuted the lie—widespread in the subservient U.S. major media—that Lithuanians have refused to negotiate, in a speech given to the Supreme Council on April 17. "The Soviet Union set a precondition for such negotiations, a condition which is known in advance as impossible to meet and, therefore, by setting this conditions it has a clear objective, which is to postpone the very issue, maybe even in the hope of misleading the public, to believe that allegedly Lithuania is being stubborn and does not want negotiations."

Landsbergis was referring to the Soviet demand that Lithuania rescind its March 11 Declaration of Independence. Although there has been a Lithuanian delegation in Moscow all of the week that ended April 27, no ranking Soviet officials saw fit to meet with them.

### **Rebellion brewing on the Hill?**

Even on Capitol Hill, where all eyes seem to be on the checkbook and the pipedream of reaping a "peace dividend" by staying in Gorbachov's good graces, the mandate for appeasement seems far from eternal. At an impromptu press conference at his office on April 26, Rep. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) charged that the U.S. had "abandoned" the Lithuanians. "We have betrayed our commitment." Durbin, who had spoken to Landsbergis during the day, said that he believed in the need to impose economic sanctions, "or at least make

clear that normal economic relations are not possible if they continue in this way." Durbin said that Bush had "fallen for all of the rhetoric that has come out of the U.S.S.R."

On April 24, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), head of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said that he would "oppose extending any new economic benefits and rewards to the Soviet leadership at the same time it is starving Lithuanians of food and fuel." Byrd also said that it would be wrong to extend Most Favored Nation status to the Soviets or to endorse any new trade agreement "while Lithuania is denied its rightful status." "There comes a time," said Byrd, "when we dare not stand mute in articulating and acting upon the principles that are the foundation stone of this nation. The overriding principle is the self-determination of independent peoples. There is a price that we inevitably will pay, and that others, including the Lithuanian people, may pay, for our standing mute."

A Republican, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (N.Y.), joined the fray April 27 with a statement saying that it was "unacceptable for the U.S. to enter into a favorable trade agreement with the Soviet Union while it crushes Lithuanian freedom under a jackboot." The statement, supported by 11 other senators, warned that "there would be little support in the Senate for the trade pact unless the Soviets relaxed the economic blockade and opened negotiations with the Lithuanians." "What kind of message are we sending," asked D'Amato, "when, on the one hand we warn the Soviets that we are considering sanctions against them; and on the other we say, 'Here, Mr. Gorbachov, is the Most Favored Nation status you desperately seek'? It's pathetic and shameful." Senator Dole, one of the supporters of the statement, said, "This is no time for business as usual. That's why nothing in Congress will happen until Lithuania is satisfactorily resolved."

While Bush was capitulating to Moscow, the State Department was putting up roadblocks to a U.S. visit by Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene, a visit which the administration did not want on the eve of the Bush-Gorbachov summit. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow made it known to the Lithuanians that that particular period was not deemed appropriate for a visit and that if Prunskiene came, she would do so as a private citizen. But according to syndicated columnists Evans and Novak, in their *Washington Post* column of April 27, when Landsbergis accused the administration of perpetrating a new Munich, the administration backtracked and assured House Democrats that Prunskiene would be granted a visa.

It is generally recognized that George Bush has gone further than anyone believed he would in trying to bolster Gorbachov, as a way of keeping up the "Potemkin village" of Bush's own standing in the popularity polls. Some Washington pundits speculate that the U.S. President, by hitching his wagon so tightly to the star of the thug in the Kremlin, has sealed his own political doom.