

EIR Feature

Repression of Lithuania may seal Gorbachov's doom

by Konstantin George

May 1, 1990 will go down in history as the day when, in Moscow's Red Square, the entire facade of Gorbachovian glasnost, the so-called perestroika revolution from above, and "democratization," all collapsed, and with it, the ludicrous rationale behind Western appeasement of Gorbachov. It was the day when two fundamental truths which the Western leaders and media have gone out of their way to conceal, asserted themselves: that the great mass of Soviet citizens, non-Russians and Russians, despise Gorbachov for what he really is, a brutal dictator; and that his treatment of Lithuania has made him more hated than ever inside the Soviet Union, including among ordinary Russians.

May 1 showed the whole world exactly how "popular" Mikhail Gorbachov is. After a tame, staged march by a mere 10,000 "trade unionists," May Day was requisitioned by the ordinary citizens, Russians, and non-Russians of cosmopolitan Moscow. A huge crowd poured onto Red Square, and within a few minutes the shock of the century was upon Gorbachov.

No fewer than 100,000 Russians and other nationalities booed, hooted, and whistled at him and the entire Soviet state and party leadership, the new Presidential Council and the old party Politburo, gathered atop the Lenin Mausoleum. As TV viewers the world over saw, a Soviet leader and his cronies were forced, in the most humiliating manner, to hurriedly leave a podium. The look in Gorbachov's face as this happened, of deep dismay, shock, and bristling anger, evoked the memory of the last mass rally held under the gaze of Ceausescu, in Bucharest, Romania last December, one day before he was overthrown. This by no means implies that the same immediate fate awaits Gorbachov, but from his contorted facial expressions, it would be a fair guess that the image of Ceausescu crossed his mind as the "unexpected" was occurring right on the Kremlin's doorstep.

As Andrei Svetov, a newly elected member of the Moscow City Council, put it: "The time when the masses would gather in Red Square and give thanks to the Politburo is over. What happened shows that the leadership does not know what is going on in the country."

The Neville Chamberlain "umbrella" set of modern Western heads of state,



James Durac

The Schiller Institute took part in this recent demonstration for ending the Hitler-Stalin Pact and recognizing Lithuania in Los Angeles. Now, the same spirit has manifested itself in Moscow.

notably U.S. President Bush and British Prime Minister Thatcher, have been justifying their sellout of independent Lithuania, by solemnly proclaiming that any support of Lithuania would topple their beloved Gorbachov and create “uncontrolled instability” in Russia. The May Day Moscow popular demonstration proved that Bush and Thatcher’s policy of abandoning Lithuania to “save Gorbachov” is not only criminal, but ludicrous.

That mass demonstration, unprecedented in Soviet history, was filled with ordinary Russians, marching in solidarity with those carrying the flags of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia, and other Captive Nations. The demonstration led off with the 100,000 shouting, in Russian, “Freedom For Lithuania!”

Other notable slogans and banners included: “President by Direct Election of the People,” “Gorbachov—Usurper,” and “Gorbachov—Dictator!,” “Down with the Red Fascist Empire!” “Politburo Retire!” “Turn Over Your Dachas!” “The Blockade of Lithuania Is a Disgrace by the President!” “Bolsheviki, Give Back the Power!” “Down with the KGB” and “Kremlin Ceausescu.” The marchers repeatedly turned to face the Kremlin leadership on the reviewing stand, and shout: “Shame!” and “Out, Out, Out!”

Everyone remembers the December scene in Bucharest where Romanian TV suddenly went off the air, showing in its last clip a terrified Nicolae Ceausescu, with a facial expression of total disbelief and horror, the sudden realization that “his” people hated him. Soviet TV also abruptly went off the air on May Day, though unlike Romania, at the very beginning of the anti-Gorbachov demonstration, and

thus well before the final humiliating scene as he and his entourage retreated from the Mausoleum.

Glasnost has always had, to put it mildly, its limits, and this time around the strictest censorship was imposed. The Soviet media, with the solitary exception of *Izvestia*, has not dared cover what really happened. *Izvestia* mentioned at the end of a long front page article that some slogans were “calls for a direct confrontation with the authorities. In these circumstances, the people on the stand, who included the newly elected mayor of Moscow, Gavril Popov [all other names, beginning with Gorbachov, were censored out of this account], were compelled to leave Red Square, and the last columns of informal groups held their demonstration only for the benefit of each other.”

Otherwise, a short TASS wire, which became the coverage for Soviet TV, radio, and *Pravda*, reported that there were “provocative, extremist slogans” by a “minority,” and “rowdies” had called for a “confrontation” against the “legal” authorities. Gorbachov’s hasty exit was not reported. One can easily censor events that take place behind closed doors, or in remote locations. But Gorbachov’s humiliation occurred before more than 100,000 eyewitnesses, guaranteed that the May Day story of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” will spread to every nook and cranny of the U.S.S.R. within a few days at most.

Beethoven defeats Bolshevism

What happened in Moscow on May Day is, while unique in the dramatic and compact way this message was delivered to Gorbachov and the Kremlin, coherent otherwise in essence

with a dynamic under way in the entire U.S.S.R. since March 11 when Lithuania declared independence. Gorbachov's attempts to crush Lithuania and his attempts at tough actions against other independence movements, such as Rukh, the Ukrainian national movement, have backfired. Far from raising the internal crisis threshold in the U.S.S.R., they have lowered that threshold much more rapidly. The mood in Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine, following the Anglo-American abandonment of Lithuania, can be summarized as: "Lithuania can only win its independence if we help it, join it in defying Moscow, and ourselves move towards independence. If Lithuania wins full freedom, then our own day of liberation from Bolshevik tyranny will be that much closer."

Lithuania's March 11 Declaration of Independence and refusal, no matter how severe the short-term economic hardships, to surrender to Moscow's blockade blackmail, have sparked a spirit of resistance and freedom among all the Empire's captive nations, Russia included. On April 29, Lithuania celebrated its independence and defiance of Mikhail Gorbachov and George Bush, through an outdoor performance in Vilnius of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which has become an international anthem of freedom since the Chinese students used it a year ago at Tiananmen Square. The performance was attended by a crowd of over 300,000. It was broadcast live on Lithuanian TV and radio, reaching also an audience of millions in neighboring Poland, Latvia, and Belorussia. Since that broadcast, many Polish citizens have begun flying Lithuanian flags or mounting emblems with the Lithuanian flag.

Lithuania is not alone

Before Gorbachov can crush Lithuania through economic blockade, the repercussions of that same blockade on domestic politics inside the U.S.S.R. will have generated social and political explosions. The blockade has cut off Russia from Lithuania's big food surpluses, provoking intense anger in the food shortage-plagued urban centers of Russia. Local Russian organizations had already broken with the blockade policy before May 1.

- A workers' delegation from Russia's West Siberian Tyumen oil-producing center arrived in Vilnius, April 26, offering Lithuania oil for food.

- Solidarity with Lithuania was also proclaimed by Gleb Lebedev, a spokesman for the "Democratic Russia" bloc of deputies who won control over the Leningrad City Council in the March 11 elections. Lebedev compared Moscow's current blockade of Lithuania with Nazi barbarism in World War II, citing the Nazi blockade of Leningrad, where 900,000 starved to death: "We sympathize with Lithuania . . . because we too [in Leningrad] were victims of a blockade in the Second World War."

- On May 3, the newly elected parliament of Lithuania's Baltic neighbor, the Republic of Latvia, convened and overwhelmingly passed a resolution "renewing" Latvia's pre-

war independence. The historic document was passed with a special guest of honor present: Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis.

The difference with Lithuania is that Latvia's independence is not declared as taking effect immediately, and stipulates a "transitional period" of negotiations with Moscow. However, in the words of Ivars Godmanis, deputy chairman of the Latvian Popular Front, and Latvia's new prime minister: "We are declaring our will to renew independence. The transition period will be to create the structures of an independent state, but it has to have a defined cutoff point." Godmanis categorically rejected the Gorbachov formula for a minimum transition period of five to six years, stressing that Latvia wants full independence within two years at most.

Beyond that, the Latvian parliament announced that measures will be taken to "strengthen coordination" with independent Lithuania. With this, Latvia has followed recent decisions by the Baltic Republic of Estonia to aid Lithuania in breaking the blockade.

Ukraine: the 'other' May 1 shock

The Red Square shock was not the only nightmare haunting Mikhail Gorbachov on May 1. Hundreds of kilometers away, in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, the largest non-Russian republic with over 50 million people, leaders and delegates from the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, one of the leading components of the Ukrainian national movement Rukh, met and founded the first pro-independence political party in Ukraine. The new party, dedicated to creating a free and independent Ukraine modeled on the constitutions of the West, was appropriately named the Republican Party. The Republican Party's platform calls for an independent Ukraine, declaring the 1922 "Treaty of Union" with Soviet Russia "null and void," because the document was signed by "an illegally emplaced government," installed by Bolshevik Moscow. The Republican Party's program provides for independent Ukraine to create its own "army on Ukrainian territory," a sovereign "Ukrainian Central Bank . . . to extend credit and issue the Ukrainian national currency," the complete confiscation of all property belonging to the Communist Party, the dissolution of the KGB, and an economy based "on principles of the market economy."

The Ukrainian delegates elected Levko Lukyanenko, one of the Helsinki Union's leaders, and the most revered freedom fighter inside Ukraine, as party chairman. Lukyanenko embodies the notion of the man of principle, making no compromises with the forces of tyranny. He has spent a total of 26 years in Soviet prisons and labor camps. Following the successful revolution in Czechoslovakia, Ukrainians bestowed another honor on Lukyanenko, referring to him as "the Ukrainian Havel," as Czech President Vaclav Havel symbolizes the revolutionary justice where yesterday's imprisoned freedom fighter, becomes tomorrow's head of state in a free land.