

Baltic republics fear Bush sellout at summit

by Konstantin George

The leaders of the Baltic republics, struggling to achieve in fact their declared independence from Moscow, fear the worst from Mikhail Gorbachov and George Bush. They fear that the May 30 Bush-Gorbachov Washington summit will finalize the Bush administration's sellout of the Baltic republics, by giving Moscow a "green light" to do as it pleases with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The pre-summit warning was sounded loud and clear by the president of independent Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis, in a May 9 interview with *Expressen*, Sweden's largest circulation daily.

The interview was run with a banner headline, quoting Landsbergis: "The West is Helping the Soviets to Crush our Freedom," and contains Landsbergis's strongest denunciations to date of the U.S.-Soviet condominium policies, responsible for the global isolation of the Baltic republics. Commenting on Gorbachov's ultimatum threat of reprisals against Lithuania's neighbor, Latvia, after it had declared independence on May 4, Landsbergis said: "I wasn't surprised. I understand that Gorbachov has received permission to crush Baltic freedom. Therefore, even the form chosen by the Latvians in their striving for freedom was not acceptable to him."

Landsbergis was referring to the fact that for Latvia, full independence will come after a two-year transitional period, and will not take effect immediately as was the case with Lithuania.

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940 as a consequence of the secret protocols of the infamous 1939 "Hitler-Stalin Pact" in which the Nazi and Communist dictators stunned the world by signing a mutual non-aggression treaty. On Aug. 23, 1989, the 50th anniversary of that shameful treaty, 1 million citizens of the three tiny

republics formed a "human chain" extending across Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. This peaceful protest was an eloquent harbinger of the events of the past weeks, which have thrown to the winds all the calculations of the Kremlin imperialists about controlling their subjects through "blood and soil" ethnic allegiances and setting national groups against each other.

Although for the past 50 years the United States has officially refused to recognize the forced incorporation of the three small states on the Baltic Sea bordering Poland, Russia, and Finland, into the Soviet empire, nevertheless, the U.S. Bush administration has refused to take the most obvious steps since Lithuania, following its first free elections in half a century, declared independence from Moscow last March 11. Allegedly out of a fear of weakening Mikhail Gorbachov's hold on power in Moscow, the United States has failed to extend full diplomatic recognition to Vilnius and to use its own considerable economic weapons to force the Kremlin to respect the self-determination and sovereignty of the Baltic states.

Lithuania faces supply crisis

In his interview to the Swedish daily, Landsbergis noted, that as the summit date approaches, the situation is becoming more and more tense in the Baltic states: "And this tension depends on the superpowers. Gorbachov can do what he is doing to Lithuania and the Western countries agree." Landsbergis then detailed how Gorbachov and the Soviet leadership will move through the remainder of May, to bring the crisis in Lithuania to a head, timed with the summit and the Bush sellout.

First, the supply crisis in Lithuania will become very critical by the end of May: "Then we will have no other fuel

than that which we have been able to buy at high prices in Belorussia and in Ukraine. . . . But we will see to it that food transport and ambulances still operate. The worst thing is perhaps not that the fuel will run out, but that the lack of raw materials will force us to close the factories.”

Together with the fuel and energy crisis coming to a head by around May 30, Landsbergis forecast that Moscow will step up its targeting of Lithuania’s food-processing industry: “Then comes the final test for Lithuania. Probably there will be organized demonstrations of displeased non-Lithuanians, either in Vilnius or Klaipeda [Memel]. There will be attempts to cause discontent among the peasants, by ensuring that there isn’t enough tractor fuel.”

Landsbergis closed the interview with a final warning to the world of what evil is being planned by the superpower condominium at the May 30 summit: “If the May 30 summit succeeds, it will mean that Gorbachov receives a letter of complete indulgence. He can then seal off the sea and all borders to us.”

Baltic states line up behind Lithuania

The very last sentence we have quoted from the Landsbergis interview, where the Lithuanian President warns that Bush is planning to allow Gorbachov to “seal off the sea and all borders to us,” contain the crucial physical detail of the planned summit sellout of Lithuania. For without such a Washington-endorsed sealing off of all borders, Gorbachov’s blockade strategy against Lithuania will have failed, and the failure will have become evident to the entire world soon after the May 30 condominium summit.

Events in the Baltic region back up this perspective. Behind the bellicose threats and ultimata, Mikhail Gorbachov’s blockade strategy, of starving Lithuania into submission and intimidating the other Baltic republics into indefinitely postponing independence, was already in a shambles by May 8, when Estonia followed the move taken by Latvia on May 4, with its own declaration of independence.

Concerning Lithuania itself, Moscow had hoped that the blockade would widen the pre-March 11, or pre-Declaration of Independence splits that had existed in the Lithuanian electorate, concerning the timetable for independence, and thus break the popular will to resist. Instead, the blockade backfired, by uniting all Lithuanians as never before behind President Landsbergis. Beyond that, the blockade forced the other Baltic republics, despite previous reservations and hesitations, off the fence and into solid support for embattled Lithuania and its brave President.

The turning point came on May 4, when the parliament of Latvia, with Landsbergis present in the chamber, voted up Latvia’s Declaration of Independence by a two-thirds majority, serving Moscow notice that Latvia was demanding that the “transition period” to achieving full independence be a maximum of two years. Landsbergis had come to the Latvian parliament with a Lithuanian delegation carrying a torch

of freedom lit in Vilnius, to the tumultuous cheers of the Latvian deputies.

Latvia’s support was not confined to mere words. An accompanying resolution stated that Latvia, which borders on Lithuania, would break the blockade and provide Lithuania with sorely needed goods. On May 8, Estonia’s parliament followed with the third Baltic Declaration of Independence, and pledge to support Lithuania. Thus, almost overnight a Baltic united front behind Lithuania had emerged, and the rage of the tyrant Gorbachov knew no limits.

Gorbachov is in a corner, unless he can get Bush’s backing for a totally resealing all of Lithuania’s borders, which means concretely, sealing off Lithuania from its sister Baltic republics. If Bush would not play Neville Chamberlain to Hitler-Gorbachov, then the Kremlin Führer would either have to quickly find a face-saving way of backing down against Lithuania, or would have to extend the blockade to encompass all three Baltic republics, an act that would have devastating consequences for the entire Soviet economy.

Gorbachov, in his rage over Latvia’s independence declaration, threatened to proceed with the latter course. He threatened, as reported by the Soviet news agency TASS on May 5, “retaliatory measures . . . of a political, economic and administrative character” against Latvia, unless that republic reverted back to its pre-May 4 status. Whatever he does, he can only do from outside Latvia. It is a measure of how deep the revolutionary process has become in the entire empire that Gorbachov can do nothing politically inside Latvia, despite the fact that nearly 50% of the republic’s population are ethnic Russians, and this ethnic base was what the Moscow rulers were counting on to oppose Latvia’s break from the Russian center.

This development was reflected in an opinion poll, published on April 30 in the Soviet government daily *Izvestia*, which admitted that 45% of the Russians living in Latvia favor immediate independence. In response to the question, “If Latvia became independent, would you remain in Latvia or emigrate to Russia?” nearly 70% of the Russians said they would definitely remain in an independent Latvia.

All these events and facts show the depth of hope and potentially excellent prospects for these nations, who as victims of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, have lived under brutal Soviet occupation for 50 years. This very hope now threatens to be crushed via the May 30 summit sellout.

Every single person who at one time or another had expressed the conviction, “If I had been around in 1938, I would have done something to stop the Munich rape of Czechoslovakia and stop Hitler in his tracks,” now has the opportunity to speak out and act to stop the planned superpower rape of the Baltic. If the sellout is clinched at the summit, the brave peoples of the Baltic will pay a high and bitter price today, the aggressor’s appetite will be whetted, and in the not too distant future, we will all be paying a far higher price for not having acted in time.