

# Gorbachov drops 'peace-loving' mask as the Baltic crisis explodes

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A series of rapid-fire events in and around Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in the Soviet-occupied Baltic region has forced the leadership of the Soviet Union to entirely drop its "peace-loving" mask and to mobilize all Russians to be prepared to crush the growing anti-Bolshevik movement in these Captive Nations—if not by threats, then by sheer military force.

"Every sign is that they are preparing for war," said congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche in a statement issued Aug. 31. "They are still talking about exterminating entire peoples, such as the people of the Baltic nations. They haven't done it yet, but they're talking in those directions. . . . We're not in a period of peace with Moscow."

The immediate trigger for Moscow's dire warning, which came in the form of a statement from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party issued Aug. 26, was the Aug. 23 commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, when 2 million citizens of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania staged the largest anti-Soviet demonstration ever held against Bolshevik rule. The demonstration took the form of a "human chain" extending some 600 kilometers, from the far north of Estonia to the south of Lithuania, demanding the end of the illegal 1940 Soviet annexation of these republics, and the restoration of national independence, to be decided by referendums to be held in each nation this October.

Three days later the Central Committee issued its declaration, which was read in full over Soviet television to maximize its impact. In the most vitriolic language imaginable, the Central Committee condemned the Baltic demonstrations, the Baltic "Popular Fronts" and other groups which organized them, and the Baltic Communist Party leaderships. The tone was very similar to the warnings given to the protesters in Tiananmen Square just before the tanks were ordered to roll.

All wishful thinking and speculation in the Western media that it was not Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov, but the so-called "conservatives" such as Yegor Ligachov, who had drafted the warning, was punctured when on Aug. 29 Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi I. Gerasimov disclosed that the statement "was worked out with the participation of all members of the Politburo—and this includes the General Secretary of the Communist Party."

## Vitriolic language

The Central Committee declaration denounced the Aug. 23 mass demonstrations in the Baltic as having the goal "to incite the people of the Baltic republics to leave the Soviet Union," as part of a plot by Baltic groups who are "in contact with foreign-based organizations and centers." It attacked the Baltic party leaders for having failed "to contain the process," while "some party committees" had even begun "to play up nationalist sentiments."

"Attempts were made to fan emotions to a point of nationalist hysteria. Slogans foisted upon thousands of people were filled to the brim with animosity toward the Soviet system, the Russian people, the Communist Party, and the Soviet Army."

Other passages carried the thinly veiled threat of treason trials and death sentences for Baltic nationalists: "Organizations sprang up which resemble political formations of the bourgeois period and the time of the Nazi occupation. . . . Moral terror was used against all those who remained faithful to internationalism and to the ideas of the unity of the Soviet Union."

Furthermore, "The situation which has arisen . . . is giving rise to ever greater alarm. The turn events are taking there is harming the vital interests of the entire Soviet people, the whole of the socialist Fatherland. . . . A serious danger is threatening the fate of the Baltic peoples. The people must know the nature of the abyss into which they are being pushed by the nationalist leaders. The consequences for the [Baltic] peoples could be disastrous if the nationalists should succeed in reaching their goals. *Their very existence could end up in question.*"

This is not the language of a "peace-loving" nation; it is the language of genocide.

## Only the beginning

The new reality was perhaps best expressed by one Estonian Popular Front leader: "We thought Stalin was dead. We were wrong." But the Baltic nationalist leaders are certainly not naive about the dangers they now face. Mark Tamrak, chief editor of the Estonian Popular Front newspaper, told Western journalists on Aug. 27: "This criticism has been escalating since the beginning of August. It was all obviously

preparatory to this announcement. We are not going to react with any kind of demonstrations or mass meetings.” That would only give Moscow an opportunity to move in”—as they have done in so many instances since the beginning of this year.

Mr. Landbergis, leader of the Lithuanian nationalist Sąjūdis movement, said straightforwardly that the resolution prepares the basis for intervention with troops into the Baltic. “Maybe they feel they must lie to people in Russia, so they will be prepared if powers in Moscow undertake the use of force. They want to make at least part of the Russians believe it is necessary.” There are currently over 300,000 Soviet troops in the Baltic region.

That threat became explicit on Aug. 28, when Estonian ideology chief and number-two man in the Estonian Communist Party, Mikk Titma, declared on Estonian television, “If needed, we can be forced to use violence against the extremists.” His warning was later aired on Finnish television.

Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership began to prepare its Russian population for war against the Balts. Beginning on Aug. 28, and continuing throughout the week, “factory meetings” were called throughout the U.S.S.R. to “discuss the Central Committee declaration,” and to “condemn separatism” in the Baltic republics and elsewhere. By Aug. 29, a deluge of “spontaneous letters” from “outraged workers” and Soviet citizens flooded the Soviet press and electronic media, “condemning separatism” and “anti-Soviet nationalism.” For instance, 320 Russian speakers, writing from Lithuania to the daily *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, called on Soviet authorities to “defend” them. “There are open calls for bloodshed. We ask the Soviet government to take measures against the provocative and destabilizing situation, and deliberate inflammation of discord between the nations,” the letter said.

### **Whipping up Great Russian frenzy**

Since early August, the Soviet leadership has put its propaganda organs on a pro-Great Russian binge, with daily denunciations of the “anti-Russian” goals of movements in the non-Russian republics. It began when the Soviet media openly supported the political strike wave launched in Estonia by the Russian chauvinist organization Interfront, as a justified answer to an Estonian electoral law that allegedly violated the civil rights of Estonia’s large Russian minority.

Further south, on Aug. 22, the Interfront in the Moldavian republic, which borders on Romania, began a similar political strike wave by the Russian workforce, to protest a language law, set for passage Aug. 29 by Moldavia’s parliament, that would make Romanian the official language. As in the Estonian case, the Soviet media praised the Russian strikes, waiting for a pretext to deliver an ultimatum to the Romanian Moldavians.

That opportunity came Aug. 27, when a huge crowd of

300,000 in Moldavia’s capital, Kishinev, protested the anniversary of Moldavia’s (i.e., Bessarabia’s) annexation by the U.S.S.R. in 1940, following the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The Soviet daily *Pravda* on Aug. 28 called the demonstrators victims of a “long-term, powerful brainwashing,” who, obsessed with “chauvinism and separatism,” were striving “to make their way to power.” Slogans such as “No to the Russian language!” and “Russians, go home!” showed that activists were able “to impose anti-Russian sentiments, separatist sentiments on the population.” The Moldavian party and government leadership were accused of failing to rebuff this, and of “allowing nationalism to flourish.”

Still more explicitly, Moscow gave the Moldavian parliament an ultimatum that if it voted for the new language law as scheduled, Moscow would view this as “a vote for separatism.”

### **Isolating Poland**

The Central Committee statement also reflected one prong of a Soviet strategy to isolate Poland’s new, non-Communist Solidarnosc government from all potential support within the East bloc. It was timed with the Aug. 26 arrival in Warsaw of Soviet KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, and the announcement that same day in Hungary, that the promised “free elections” there will be moved up from June 1990 to sometime earlier in the year—i.e., before the Hungarian opposition can effectively mount a campaign. The Hungarian regime and Moscow are evidently seeking to avoid the “errors” committed in Poland, by ensuring continued Communist control over the next “democratically” elected regime.

The coming crackdown in the Baltic is foreshadowed by the ongoing brutal suppression in the Ukraine, the largest of the 14 non-Russian Soviet republics, where on Aug. 23 support rallies for the Baltic peoples were broken up by heavy police intervention.

Taking a look at the map of Eastern Europe, it is obvious that the Baltic and the Ukraine are the two key regions of the Soviet Union bordering on Poland. The existence of a Solidarnosc regime in Poland therefore makes it imperative for Moscow to act now and smash resistance in the Baltic and the Ukraine, so as to complete a Warsaw Pact *cordon sanitaire* consisting of those countries along with the Quisling regimes of East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The crackdown is also being extended to deal with new eruptions in the Transcaucasus, which will escalate in conjunction with the general strike in Azerbaijan, set to start Sept. 2. On Aug. 29 Soviet Interior Minister Vadim Bakatin announced that more “special troops” of the Interior Ministry had been dispatched “to keep order” in the two Transcaucasian republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, after a new flare-up between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Karabakh. Bakatin warned of “an unconstitutional alternative structure of power” in Nagorno-Karabakh.