

Movement, Sajudis, has educated people to be politicians—a certain type of politician—simply because of the situation in which they have been placed.

EIR: There must have been very deep-going changes in the psychology of the Lithuanian people during this period of dramatic upheaval. Undoubtedly this affected the process through which political leaders emerged, that something more than simple political expertise was required from a political leadership in such a situation. Could it not be the case that the leaders who are now being brought forth represent the deeper aspirations of the people at this important historical moment?

Abisalas: I see no big difference which would make them different from anyone else. If I went into this question in depth, this could possibly turn into a novel, or at least into a very long article. But briefly, the difference between the Lithuanians and the Russians is that the Lithuanians have faith in people who are educated, who are part of the intelligentsia. That is the difference with the Russian people. Another difference is the memory among the Lithuanians of having been a free and independent state. This also distinguishes us from the peoples of Russia.

EIR: Is there not also a real cultural difference here with the Russians, because of the role of the Catholic Church in Lithuania? That in spite of its geographical proximity to Moscow, Lithuania has been, historically and culturally, a part of the mainstream of Western civilization.

Abisalas: I think there is a twofold aspect to this question. I believe the reason that people here haven't been totally destroyed morally is due to the Catholic Church. Secondly, the Catholic Church has been given a great deal of credit because it upheld the historical memory of Lithuania as an independent nation. Now that isn't characteristic of the Catholic Church itself, but it is characteristic of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

EIR: Lastly, let me ask you, what message would you like to get across to the U.S. administration and to the members of the U.S. Congress with regard to what they should do for Lithuania?

Abisalas: Let me warn you that I'm not prepared to answer a question like that. However, I believe that the U.S. administration could use their personal contacts in Moscow to influence the government there, perhaps behind closed doors. As regards the Congress, they could be more specific in their support of the movement here. Secondly, there should be a specific statement of when the administration, under what conditions, it will recognize Lithuania as an independent state. Of course, those conditions shouldn't be impossible to fulfill. Afterwards, Lithuania will need economic support, although we're not expecting a great deal of economic help from the West. We tend to trust in our own ability to maintain ourselves economically.

Independence votes sweep the U.S.S.R.

by Konstantin George

The results of the March 18 parliamentary elections in the Soviet Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia, and the runoff elections in the three Slavic core republics of Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia demonstrate—in the immediate wake of Lithuania's declaration of independence—show the depth of support for independence in the non-Russian republics, and the positive effect of the East European democratic revolutions on the Russian urban electorate itself.

Estonia and Latvia

The pro-independence candidates of the Popular Front and allied groups were victorious in the elections in Estonia and Latvia, the two nations illegally annexed, along with Lithuania, by the U.S.S.R. in 1940.

Of the 201 seats in the new Latvian parliament, the Latvian Popular Front won at least 119 of the 170 seats decided in the first round, thus already gaining a pro-independence majority. The Latvian Popular Front is within reach of attaining, in the runoffs for the remaining 31 seats, the two-thirds majority needed to abolish Latvia's Soviet constitution and reinstate the pre-1940 constitution of independent Latvia. The scope of the Popular Front's victory is doubly impressive, given that Slavs (for the most part Russians) form half of Latvia's population, in stark contrast to Lithuania, where native Lithuanians comprise 80% of the population.

In short, by conservative estimates, between one quarter and one-third of Latvia's Russian population joined in voting for Latvia's independence. A high percentage of the remaining Russians, while opposed to total independence, do favor Latvia attaining "maximum sovereignty" within the U.S.S.R. federation. These results, which tear to shreds the stereotype of the pro-independence Latvian confronting a monolithic bloc of Russian chauvinists, are not as surprising as they may seem at first glance.

One cannot underestimate the effect on the Russians living in the Baltic republics of the collapse of living standards in the Russian Federation. Whatever problems Russians may have in Latvia and Estonia, they are far better off in these republics, than back in Russia. Many of them see independence, or full domestic sovereignty, as attaching these republics, complete with their Russian inhabitants, to a Western standard of living and lifestyle.

The same voting pattern was seen in Estonia, where Russians constitute 39% of the population. The Popular Front

and allied pro-“independence now” formations won at least 68 of the 105 seats in the Estonian parliament. The Russian chauvinist Interfront did not win anywhere near the 40% of the vote it theoretically could have received, had voting patterns been on strictly ethnic lines. Interfront got about one-sixth of the total vote, or 45% of the Russian vote, winning a mere 18 seats. Again, as in Latvia, a majority of the Russians voted either for independence or full autonomy.

Ukraine

In Ukraine, with 54 million inhabitants, by far the largest non-Russian republic, the winners in the March 11 elections and the March 18 runoffs were the Democratic Bloc, a coalition of reformist forces led by the pro-independence Ukrainian National Movement called Rukh. In the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, the Democratic Bloc swept 16 of 22 districts. Where Rukh was defeated in Kiev races, it was only because the party hierarchy had employed the crudest imaginable “get out the vote” measures. For example, Vladimir Ivashko, Ukrainian Communist Party head and member of the Soviet Politburo, was saved from certain defeat at the hands of Rukh candidate Alex Kvas, by 12,000 soldiers of the Kiev Military District being marched straight from their maneuvers to Kiev polling places, to vote for Ivashko. The handy “votes” of Kiev Military District personnel similarly provided the margin of victory for an Army general, Aleksandr Sukhov, and a general of the Interior Troops, Yaroslav Kondratyev.

The same tricks were employed in Kiev City Council races, to no avail. Rukh won a solid majority of 70 of the 120 City Council seats. For the first time since the Ukrainian Rada (Council) in Kiev proclaimed Ukraine independent in 1918, Ukrainian patriots have regained control of their capital. In all large Ukrainian cities, Rukh and the Democratic Bloc scored well, in most cases winning majorities. In the western Ukrainian metropolis of Lvov, Rukh won every contested parliamentary seat. In the port of Odessa, party boss Georgi Kryuchkov was defeated. In the eastern Ukraine Donbass mining and industrial region, which spearheaded last summer’s mass strikes, Democratic Bloc candidates, including strike committee leaders, swept aside the candidates of the party hierarchy across the board.

The depth of the Ukrainian surge toward independence was also indicated by the fact that Rukh and Democratic Bloc victories were not confined to the urban areas. Valentina Shevchenko, outgoing president of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, had declared her candidacy in what she thought was a “safe” rural constituency, where a sleepy peasantry would dutifully vote for the “boss” as in the past. Shortly before the election, she quit the race to avoid the humiliating spectacle of being outpolled by the Democratic Bloc in a rural area.

Russian Federation

As of this writing, the lack of data concerning the vote from the hinterlands and provinces, makes impossible a final

analysis of the overall results of the March 11 elections and the March 18 runoffs in the huge Russian Federation. However, in Russia’s two largest cities, Leningrad and Moscow, an overwhelming victory was achieved by the de facto new political party, Democratic Russia, which had campaigned for abolishing the Communist Party’s power and establishing a “democratic, multi-party system,” for a “Russian rebirth” in the context of “full sovereignty” for all the U.S.S.R.’s republics, and, last but not least, for Russia to “join Europe,” and the process of democratic revolutions that have swept Eastern Europe.

In Leningrad, Democratic Russia’s local affiliate, Democratic Elections ’90, won at least 220, or nearly three-quarters of the 300 seats on the city council. In Moscow, Democratic Russia won a majority of the city council, gaining 281 of the 498 seats. Thus, Democratic Russia has become the new governing body for the two most important urban centers of Russia. Democratic Russia’s sweep of Russian Federation parliament seats in these two cities was no less impressive. They won nearly all of Leningrad’s seats in the Russian parliament, and 55 of Moscow’s 65 seats.

These election results have forced Gorbachov into an internal policy stance that would have been unthinkable for him, or any other Soviet leader, even a few months ago. In his post-presidential election statements, he stressed that his first priority will be to secure laws granting each republic “maximum sovereignty” within “a new federation,” and provide for a “legal mechanism” for a republic to secede, albeit through a long process, taking up to five years. Events in Lithuania and elsewhere have of course already overtaken him, but this new policy is seen as the only chance to slow down, through heavy concessions, the independence drive sweeping the republics, a dynamic which is now accelerating inside the empire’s Slavic core as well. With a nervous eye on the Ukraine, and the absence to date of a mass Russian backlash against the non-Russian republics, Gorbachov is hoping that his “new federation” move has not been made too late.

‘From the prison in which the politician’s career expires, the influence of the statesman is raised toward the summits of his life’s providential course. Since Solon, the Socratic method has become the mark of the great Western statesman. Without the reemergence of that leadership, our imperiled civilization will not survive this century’s waning years.’

—Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

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