

Violence continues against Baltic states, ordered by Moscow center

by Konstantin George

On Jan. 13 in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, Soviet paratroopers murdered 15 Lithuanians. On Jan. 20, in the Latvian capital of Riga, an elite unit of the U.S.S.R. Internal Affairs Ministry Troops killed four Latvians.

Contrary to the delusions retailed by most Western media, the bloodshed was not caused by "local acts" by "break-away" units of the Army or Internal Affairs Troops. Both Bloody Sundays were conducted by elite units of the Army and "Black Beret" Internal Affairs troops, the most professional, disciplined troops. Their commanders would do nothing without orders from Moscow—and not merely orders, but signed orders, approved by President Mikhail Gorbachov, and passed down through the Defense Ministry or Internal Affairs Ministry.

Gorbachov delivers ultimatum

Gorbachov held a "press conference" at the Soviet Foreign Ministry briefing room on Jan. 22, in response to events in the Baltic republics. The Soviet dictator read a statement, and then departed, allowing no questions.

Gorbachov began by blaming the "parliaments of the governments" of the Baltic republics, and not the Army or Moscow, for the "tragic events" that had occurred there, because they had passed "illegal laws," in "defiance of presidential decrees . . . discriminated against members of other nationalities," meaning the Russians, stripping them of their "citizen's rights," and "showing disrespect for the armed forces." All this had "heightened tensions and caused the loss of human lives," which he "regretted." He made a vague pledge to "investigate" the "tragic events," as he had also done after the April 1989 massacre in Tbilisi, Georgia, a pledge which never materialized, but, as in the Tbilisi case, he did not even hint at eventual punishment of the Defense or Internal Affairs Ministry.

Gorbachov declared that there can be "no further tolerance of the escalation of tensions in the Baltic republics," giving their parliaments an ultimatum to repudiate "unconstitutional laws," i.e., an ultimatum to capitulate and remain in the U.S.S.R., or else. He ordered "political organizations, committees, and fronts" to obey the Soviet Constitution.

This passage was misinterpreted in many Western press

accounts as a warning to the Russian chauvinist Interfront and Committee of National Salvation organizations that have sprung up in the three Baltic republics to unseat the legal republican governments. The main warning in this passage was directed not at Interfront, but at the three Baltic Popular Fronts, which, by demanding the end of illegal Soviet occupation, are operating in "violation" of the Soviet Constitution.

Finally, Gorbachov stated that the three Baltic republics are "free to leave the U.S.S.R.," on the basis of "referendums," and, after the referendums, "in accordance with the provisions of the U.S.S.R. Constitution." What these words mean in reality, as every Baltic citizen knows, is the theoretical possibility of achieving independence after a mandatory five-to-six year "transition period" following a "referendum."

'Creeping' state of emergency

The stage for a protracted crackdown, and more important, an evolving, "creeping" state of emergency, eventually embracing most if not all of the U.S.S.R., was set in a joint announcement by the Defense and Internal Affairs Ministries on Jan. 24, that, starting Feb. 1, units of the Army and Internal Troops would be patrolling "all major cities" in every part of the Soviet Union. Corresponding instructions were issued to all military district and garrison commanders. The announcement made it explicit that the troops on such patrols had a blank check to make use of earlier decrees in late November by Defense Minister Yazov and President Gorbachov, authorizing military forces to "defend themselves" and "return fire if fired upon." Both in the Vilnius and Riga massacres, the military's actions were "justified" as the troops having "returned fire."

A Jan. 30 presidential decree by Gorbachov instructed the Defense and Internal forces to conduct patrols to "maintain public order in the streets and public places." A sharp protest was issued by the government of the Russian Federation denouncing the decree as a "crude violation" of human rights and the "state sovereignty" of Russia and the other republics. Neither the U.S.S.R. Federation Council, consisting of the republic leaderships, nor any republic governments or parlia-

ments had been consulted or informed in advance of these threatening decrees. The Russian Federation government demanded the immediate revocation of these "unconstitutional measures." The Georgian republic's protest declared the decree "null and void."

The Russian protest stated that Moscow's decision to enact these patrols was an act one small step short of proclaiming a state of emergency. The Russian government disclosed that already on Dec. 29, secret instructions to patrol all major Soviet cities had been issued by the two ministries to all Army and Internal troop units. The Dec. 29 date is instructive. It was only two days after the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies session had closed, granting Gorbachov full presidential dictatorship powers.

The facts presented so far, as opposed to the confetti of "troop withdrawals" from the Baltic now grabbing the headlines, are the crucial ones. If Moscow were intending any other course than escalating repression and, then it could prove this by simply revoking these quasi-martial law decrees.

The fullest details of the troop withdrawals were presented Jan. 30 by Internal Affairs Minister Boris Pugo in an interview to the daily *Rabochaya Tribuna*. Pugo disclosed that the paratroopers sent into the Baltic during January would be leaving, as well as two-thirds of the Internal troops' elite units sent in during January. Here was a very carefully formulated piece of psychological warfare. Let's put Pugo into plain English:

Fact 1: The Baltic republics already had a heavy presence of permanently stationed elite Internal troops, i.e., the hated "Black Berets," before January. They will remain, as will one-third of the additional "Black Berets" sent in January. The net result of the "withdrawal," is that there are *more* Internal troops in the Baltic for operations in February, than were there in December.

Fact 2: Concerning the paratroopers, the one regiment deployed to Lithuania in January will return to neighboring Belorussia. However, as Pugo said, the "withdrawal" does not affect Soviet troops permanently based in the Baltic. For Lithuania, this means, *inter alia*, that the elite 76th Guards Airborne Division outside Kaunas will remain. Overall in the Baltic, "permanently based" Soviet troop strength is more than sufficient to execute any scale of crackdown.

Fact 3: As noted by Lithuanian President Landsbergis and other Baltic leaders, the "withdrawal" does not include Soviet troops abandoning *any* of the buildings and other facilities they have occupied in Vilnius and elsewhere.

Repression continues

- On the night of Jan. 24, according to reports relayed directly from Vilnius to *EIR*, Soviet soldiers occupied a building stocked with paper, confiscating all the paper needed to print the independent newspapers, and kidnaped a young student. Six Lithuanians, members of a government institution, were shot at by Soviet soldiers, then taken to a

military installation and tortured in the presence of three British journalists.

- Near Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, on the morning of Jan. 24, two Swedish unionists were found murdered. Bertil Winberg, national chairman of the construction workers association, and Ove Fredriksson, national chairman of the woodworkers and carpenters trade union, were on a mission to set up collaboration between Baltic trade unions and their Western neighbors.

- On Jan. 25, the London *Independent* reported that "Soviet troops have been drafted to the Lithuanian-Polish border, barbed wire fences and floodlights erected, and air and ground patrols increased, in what could be preparations to seal off Lithuania from the outside world."

- On the night of Jan. 27, Soviet soldiers stormed into two posts of the Lithuanian border guards on the border with Belorussia, armed with automatic rifles, which they shot into the air. They smashed windows and furniture, took out a pile of documents, and left.

Triad consolidates power

Gorbachov's Jan. 22 ukase reflects the continuing consolidation of power in Moscow by a triad of Army, KGB-security forces, and the Russian national political, ecclesiastical, and cultural policy-shaping elite. This combination started openly lobbying for a presidential dictatorship last November. Spearheading these demands were the Soyuz group of parliamentarians, with two Army colonels, Viktor Alksnis and Nikolai Petrushenko, as its leaders, and the Army-backed Russian-chauvinist "fronts" and Committees for National Salvation active in the Baltic republics, and in Russian-inhabited regions of Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and other republics.

In fact, a presidential dictatorship was rubber-stamped by the Dec. 17-27 session of the Congress of People's Deputies. The new, "presidential cabinet" government appointed by Gorbachov is a government under the complete control of a coalition representing Russia's military-industrial complex. Now, the same Soyuz Group and the Committees of National Salvation have presented Gorbachov with a new ultimatum: "Go ahead and smash these republics, or else you will be gone from the scene."

The lobby for the crackdown has taken its brief to the Western media. In an interview to the German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, published Jan. 23, Alksnis declared that the Army-backed Lithuanian Committee of National Salvation, which has called on the Army to overthrow the legal government of President Landsbergis, told him: "We did everything Gorbachov asked of us, after this he was to have imposed a presidential regime, but he has betrayed us." On the same day, the Danish daily *Berlinske Tidende* ran another interview with Alksnis citing a "discussion" with the Latvian Committee for National Salvation, which repeated, verbatim, the formulations against Gorbachov issued by its coun-

terpart in Lithuania.

Timed with this media campaign, the various committees announced the formation of an All-U.S.S.R. Committee for National Salvation, to take power in various republics and regions. The self-proclaimed committee head, one Vladimir Voronin, was quoted Jan. 22 in a new Moscow newspaper called *Independent* that the current policy of the Soviet leadership is "leading Russia into a dead-end street, into factional warfare and blood." Voronin declared that "in the coming two-three months," the various committees would "gain the confidence of the people and take power legally."

According to the French daily *Le Monde* of Jan. 23, Voronin's comments were actually made in late November, which would set his deadline between late January and the end of February.

Message to Ukraine

Since mid-January, though unreported in the West, Soviet airborne troops have been arresting hundreds of draft evaders in the western part of Ukraine. Indeed, a Baltic-style reign of terror has descended on Ukraine, the largest of the non-Russian republics. Leaders of last October's student hunger strikes have also been jailed.

Moscow has also activated a Russian-chauvinist anti-independence blackmail operation against Ukraine's territorial integrity. This was done through a Jan. 20 referendum in Crimea, on whether Crimea should become an "autonomous republic" that would "remain in the U.S.S.R." The referendum was a message to Ukrainian nationalists that any attempt to emulate the Baltic republics would mean large losses of territory to Russia, including the vital Black Sea littoral. The referendum had been set originally for February.

Crimea, with a 70% Russian population, is the main bastion of activist Russian chauvinism in Ukraine. A strong "yes" vote for Russia was assured, even with an honest vote. However, according to the official results, an incredible 93.26% voted for Crimea to become an "autonomous republic," with the future option of leaving Ukraine and joining Russia.

Future such "democratic" referenda are planned to truncate and strangle the Baltic republics and Georgia, should they not renounce their demands for independence.

A Lithuanian "Crimea" is already on the agenda. On Jan. 18, the day Lithuanian President Landsbergis was forced to meet with Gen. Boris Gromov, the number two man at the U.S.S.R. Internal Affairs Ministry, and then had to announce his formal agreement to a referendum in Lithuania on the independence question, the following "news" item was highlighted in Soviet TV and domestic radio: "In the city of Klaipeda only 17% of the population support Sajudis [the Lithuanian independence party, to which Landsbergis belongs] and want to leave the Soviet Union." Klaipeda, the former Memel, is Lithuania's main seaport and access to the outside world.

Gorbachov is lying on Baltic atrocity

The editor of the Paris-based Les Nouvelles Baltes magazine was interviewed in Paris on Jan. 15 by Christine Bierre.

EIR: Following the Soviet intervention against Lithuania, Gorbachov declared that it was not he who had given the order to shoot, and pretended to be surprised about what happened. Could this mean that Gorbachov is no longer really ruling over the Soviet Union, that he has lost control of his troops? Or is he lying, because he doesn't want to lose all Western economic aid?

Goult-Liiv: It is a total lie, because had he not been informed, he would have immediately gone himself to find out what was happening, which he didn't do. The second thing, is that the forces which were sent over there were not the regular Army forces but those of the Interior Ministry, the KGB, the forces that Gorbachov controls. Besides, if I'm not mistaken, Gorbachov never pretended that he didn't deploy those forces, but only that he didn't give the order to shoot. He gave the order to send the military forces of the Interior Ministry to intervene militarily there, there were shots, there were several dead; therefore to say after that, that he didn't give the order to shoot, is a bit much.

EIR: What is the latest news you have from Lithuania, Latvia, and particularly Estonia, where Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin is still visiting, after having made a joint call with the three Baltic states for the U.N. to postpone the Jan. 15 deadline for the Iraqi evacuation of Kuwait, in order to bring in the question of the sovereignty of the Baltic states?

Goult-Liiv: I prefer to talk only about Estonia because I don't have direct news of the other Baltic states. In Estonia, demonstrations of the Interfront, the Muscovite reactionary movements, are being organized. As usual, these demonstrations are composed 50% by workers of the northwest industries of the country, and the other 50% are military men in plain clothes. Yeltsin is still in Tallinn, which is a very important point because he will be addressing by radio the soldiers in the Army, asking them to reflect and not to obey their officers. I hope that he is addressing the Russians who are demonstrating, to explain to them that their interest is the same as that of the Estonian republic.

EIR: Do you think that if Yeltsin puts all his weight on the