

Landsbergis rips both superpowers over new massacre in Lithuania

by Hartmut Cramer

In the early morning hours of July 31, another horrific massacre was carried out in Lithuania, the worst since the "Bloody Sunday" of last January, when 14 people were killed and more than 400 wounded in an assault by Soviet military forces on the television transmission tower in Vilnius. The Moscow regime at that time had cynically exploited the Gulf situation, knowing full well that U.S. President Bush would not lift a finger to stop a massacre of the Lithuanian people at the same time he was giving the final orders for the "surgical" air bombardment of Iraq, with the ultimate goal—as has since been proven—of destroying Iraq's infrastructure and heavily targeting the Iraqi civilian population.

The joint game of the two superpowers in relation to the Baltic states has been functioning ever since. The more likely a new summit meeting between Bush and Gorbachov became, the more frequently there were "border incidents": Disguised members of the feared OMON black beret units, which answer directly to Soviet Internal Affairs Minister Boris Pugo, would assault a Lithuanian border post, systematically burn down the building, and manhandle and abduct the customs officers who were on guard there.

Executions at Medininkai

On July 31, hence at the very moment when George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachov were proclaiming in Moscow their "new, peaceful world order," a brutal attack occurred on the Medininkai border post, in which six Lithuanian customs officers were killed and two more were critically wounded.

Moscow will have overwhelming difficulties in presenting this massacre, as they have in the past, as a "measured response" to a Lithuanian "provocation," because the Lithuanian functionaries were first forced to lie on the floor of the customs office, before they were executed with a series of shots to the head.

Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis informed the public on the afternoon of July 31 about the massacre. The Parliament held a special session on Aug. 1, and a national day of mourning was set for Aug. 3, the day the victims were buried.

If there were, after Jan. 13, any illusions remaining in Lithuania about the coordination of the two superpowers, they are now shattered. Gorbachov's announcement, crafted

to calm down the world media at the summit press conference in Moscow, that his KGB chief Gen. Vladimir Kryuchkov had offered Lithuania's President his cooperation in getting to the bottom of the latest "incident," was promptly denied in Vilnius. "It's a lie," stated Rita Dapkus, the spokesperson of the Lithuanian Parliament, in a statement released on July 31. "Kryuchkov never made any such offer, and he also did not speak on the telephone with President Landsbergis."

Bush drops the mask

George Bush finally let his mask drop in Moscow. Instead of sharply protesting the massacre, he closely matched his formulation to that of Gorbachov; he even had the gall to urge "both sides" to exercise moderation, which is worse than a slap in the face to the sorely tried Lithuanians: It is the official admission of the fact that there is no place for the sovereign Baltic republics in Bush's new world order.

Lithuania's President Landsbergis clearly recognized this and drew the obvious consequences. At his July 31 press conference, he not only mentioned the "highest levels of the Soviet leadership" as responsible for the latest massacre, but he also pointedly criticized the United States: "Every time the U.S.A. improves relations with Moscow, the Soviets hit the Baltic states with armed force; especially Lithuania. In fact, the United States of America is making concessions to Moscow, because it is not vigorously demanding from the Soviet Union that the guilty parties for the murders of January 1991 in Lithuania and Latvia be punished, that the buildings occupied by Soviet units be given back, and the OMON terrorists be withdrawn from the Baltic states. We cannot allow ourselves to forget this connection or overlook it."

It would be refreshing to hear such clear and courageous words from the German government. The closest approximation so far has come from Dr. Wolfgang von Stetten, a politician from the ruling Christian Democratic Union party. He is chairman of the German-Baltic Friendship Circle which was recently founded in Bonn, and which has over 100 members of the federal German parliament as members. He demanded in a first communiqué to Gorbachov "that the OMON special forces be withdrawn immediately from Lithuania, and serious negotiations be undertaken to nullify the Soviet occupation of 1940."