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**WHAT PRICE LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE?**

by

Ina Navazelskis

Saturday, March 31, was a beautiful spring day in Vilnius. The sun shone; a gusty, warm breeze blew. People were out shopping or strolling along Gediminas Prospect, Vilnius' central boulevard. Life looked normal.

It was, however, far from that. It was on this balmy spring day that Mikhail Gorbachev delivered his most stinging written rebuke yet to the Lithuanian leadership. Almost three weeks to the day after the Lithuanians declared independence, Gorbachev warned of "grave consequences" if the Lithuanian parliament refused to revoke all the laws, declarations, resolutions and appeals that it had passed in the interim.

Gorbachev's primary target, of course, was the declaration of independence itself, or as the Lithuanians call it, the "reestablishment" of the independent statehood of Lithuania. The Lithuanians have been calling for negotiations with Moscow ever since they passed this act on March 11. Gorbachev now stipulated he would sit down at the negotiating table only if the Lithuanians revoked it.

"The current Lithuanian leadership is not listening to the voice of reason," Gorbachev's ultimatum to the Lithuanian Parliament began. It was totally ignoring the decisions of the extraordinary third session of the Soviet People's Congress held in mid-March (which condemned all the Lithuanian moves) and was "carrying out actions which conflict with the Constitution of the Soviet Union, and which, in the view of the entire Union, are openly provocational and insulting."

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"...This way is disastrous," Gorbachev warned, "it will only lead down a blind alley."

The March 31 ultimatum was one of the more alarming threats made by the Kremlin in the "war of nerves" between Vilnius and Moscow during the first month of Lithuania's independence. It has, in all aspects, been an unequal contest. Unable to defend itself and the country by any means other than appealing to the Soviet Union's and the world's sense of righteousness, the Lithuanian leadership stood helplessly by as Moscow took one intimidating step after another.

But this is not the only front on which the new Lithuanian leadership has been embattled. As the victors of the February 24 elections to the Lithuanian parliament, the opposition movement Sajudis lost little time in securing the power it had won at the ballot box. Yet, in that rush, it all but ignored the independent Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP). Thus, the first days of Lithuanian independence were marked more by internal political squabbling than by paying attention to what Moscow was planning.

This, of course, didn't last. Sajudis and the LCP soon put their differences on hold, for barely a few days passed before the Kremlin fired its first salvo. Ever since, nervousness is a regular feature of everyday life here. Lithuanians seek reassurance from crystal balls as well as from the new leadership that they will eventually prevail. In some private circles, for example, friends comforted one another recently by recalling a television program shown over Moscow's channel late at night on March 31. It featured an interview between a Russian reporter and an Indian guru, somewhere on a mountaintop in a remote part of India. The reporter asked the guru how he predicted the future for the Soviet Union. The guru answered that after Lithuania, two other republics would break away, and after a while, so would a few more. But, cautioned the guru, things would not go well for those republics that broke away last. It took very little time for Lithuanians to interpret this to mean that all would end up happily for the republics that broke away first.

Even the local weather reporter on the Lithuanian television channel offered his own brand of meteorological solace. On at least two occasions during March he informed viewers that throughout the twentieth century, whenever there has been warm weather, political winds have also blown in good tidings. (March was unseasonably warm this year.) Conversely, he reported, the weather for all the years when disaster befell Lithuania -- such as 1939, 1940, 1945 -- was colder than usual.

Still, the general psychological distress in society has so far been held in check. As Soviet soldiers occupied one public building after another, as the rumble of tanks and armoured personnel carriers has been heard more than usual in Vilnius streets, public order has nevertheless been maintained. Several times since March 11, Vytautas Landsbergis, the president of the Lithuanian Parliament, appeared on television to appeal for restraint. He asked that people not allow themselves to be provoked into retaliatory acts which could then be used as an excuse to destabilize Lithuania. So far, his appeals have worked.

But by declaring independence so quickly, the new Lithuanian leadership jumped "naked into the nettles". Although themselves unprepared -- having no contingency plans for a worst-case total economic blockade -- the Lithuanians played their trump card without hesitation. They gambled that Gorbachev would not risk his entire policy of perestroika, along with his carefully cultivated relationship with the West, by clamping down. Gorbachev has indeed faced a certain dilemma in how to bare his famous "iron teeth" in Lithuania without creating martyrs in the process. He has nevertheless managed to do so quite effectively.

#### **Moscow is not pleased**

Soviet displeasure already began to make itself felt during the week following March 11. Late on March 15 in Moscow, the extraordinary Third Session of the Congress of People's Deputies passed a resolution stating that the Lithuanian leadership's activities between March 10 and 12 were invalid and illegal. It required that the rights of every citizen as well as the rights and interests of the Soviet Union and the other Soviet republics to be guaranteed in Lithuania. Gorbachev gave the Lithuanians three days to inform him how they planned to do that. On March 18, Landsbergis sent him a telegram rejecting the Congress' assessments as having "no legal foundation" and assuring the Soviet leader that the human rights of every citizen were protected by Lithuanian laws.

By that time, more Soviet military personnel and equipment had already been deployed to Lithuania. (While there are no official figures, a well-informed local journalist here told me that the number of troops in the Lithuania doubled in the past month, from some 40,000 to 80,000.) They are under the command of General Varenikov, who is in charge of all military operations in Lithuania. Varenikov is also commander of all land forces in the Soviet Union, and was formerly in command of Soviet operations in Afghanistan and Baku.

The first reports of unusual Soviet army activities, including personnel marking the border between Lithuania and Byelorussia, were announced in the Lithuanian Parliament on Saturday, March 17. (Both the neighboring Byelorussian and Kaliningrad region authorities have since made claims on certain Lithuanian

territories.) From the weekend of March 17-18, Soviet military helicopters began to hover over Vilnius almost daily. They frequently scattered leaflets from a "USSR Citizens Committee". These leaflets usually urged people either to denounce the activities of the Lithuanian Parliament, or to call for direct presidential rule from Moscow to be introduced in Lithuania. In the following days, Soviet armoured personnel carriers made themselves more visible than usual on the streets of Vilnius.

On March 21, Gorbachev demanded that all personally owned hunting weapons in Lithuania be surrendered to the Ministry of Internal Affairs within seven days; there were numerous instances where such weapons were forcibly confiscated. In the same proclamation, he announced restrictions on foreigners traveling to Lithuania and called for increased monitoring of the activities of those already there.

On March 30, Moscow also appointed its own Chief Prosecutor for Lithuania, declaring that it did not recognize the legitimacy of Arturas Paulauskas, who had been appointed Chief Prosecutor himself by the Lithuanian Parliament on March 22. 107 out of 114 employees at the Lithuanian State Procuracy declared their loyalty to Paulauskas the same afternoon. Shortly thereafter, armed Soviet Internal Ministry soldiers dressed as militia took over the building, installing Moscow's appointee, Antanas Petrauskas. Although at first allowed into his own office, Paulauskas was later barred. In the following days, additional soldiers reinforced the military presence in the building. In addition to Paulauskas, they also barred several other workers from entering the Procuracy, and prevented still others from taking the daily mail out of the building. On April 5, Paulauskas moved his offices to the Vilnius city Procuracy.

The independent Lithuanian Communist Party was also not spared. As in any messy divorce, both the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and the independent LCP are haggling over whose assets belong to whom. Until the LCP decided to break away from the CPSU last December, there had never been any question: All Communist Party assets in Lithuania were the property of the LCP. Not any more. During the last two weeks of March, several key public buildings in Vilnius where both Communist parties now claim ownership were occupied by armed Soviet soldiers. They acted on the request of the local Communist Party faction still loyal to Moscow (This faction is officially known by the unwieldy acronym "LCP/CPSU platform"). Among the buildings taken over are: 1) the city of Vilnius Communist Party headquarters (occupied March 23), 2) the Higher Party School (occupied March 25) -- the ownership of which had been transferred from the LCP to the Pedagogical Institute just two weeks previously --, 3) the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (occupied March 25), 4) the LCP's Central Committee headquarters on Gediminas Prospect (occupied March 27), 5) The Institute of Party History (March 30) and 6) the Press House (occupied March

30). In some buildings -- such as the Central Committee headquarters -- employees were allowed to continue their regular work. In others, they were locked out.

The Press House was one of the former. Located in a residential neighborhood of typical multi-storey rectangular, cinderblock apartment buildings, the 18-story Press House publishes over 40 newspapers, including almost all daily and weekly papers in Lithuania. It is also home to the editorial offices of Tiesa (Truth), Lietuvos Rytas (Lithuanian Morning; formerly known as KomsomolTruth), and the independent music radio station, "M-1". It is officially the property of the LCP's Central Committee, and therefore was one of the assets which the CPSU contended it had paid for and thus owned. The official explanation for the occupation of the building was that the CPSU was only protecting its property.

On April 2, three days after the takeover, Juozas Kuolelis, a leader of the "LCP/CPSU platform", instructed employees to stop publishing certain "anti-Soviet" newspapers -- such as the weeklies Gimtasis Kraštas (Native Land), Atgimimas (Rebirth), the Russian-language Soglacie and the daily newspapers Respublika and the Polish-language Kurier Wilenski. The workers rejected the order, and despite the armed Soviet soldiers at the entrances and in the printing facility itself, continued to publish all newspapers. In the meantime, the Lithuanian Parliament organized a group of civilian guards to guard the Soviet ones. Such was the stand-off at the Press House when at about 5:30 a.m. on Palm Sunday (April 8), thirteen truckloads of Soviet soldiers arrived there and unsuccessfully tried to dislodge the civilian volunteer force. They failed. A hastily called together picket of some 3,000 people -- together with some quick backroom politicking between the Lithuanian leadership and the Soviet military command in Vilnius -- resulted in the thirteen truckloads of troops departing the premises shortly before noon. Meanwhile, the people stayed there throughout the day. As evening came, their vigil at the Press House turned into an all-night rock around the clock music festival for the youth. In every cloud....

Those people in Lithuania who outright oppose independence -- 9% of the total population, and 33% of the non-Lithuanians living here, according to a recent survey -- have played a considerable role in adding to the tension. Many belong to Yedinstvo, a local anti-Sajudis, pro-Moscow organization whose members are almost all non-Lithuanian. Yedinstvo members have voiced their anger at a number of demonstrations -- two of which were held right next door to the Lithuanian Parliament. Together with the "LCP/CPSU Platform" fraction, Yedinstvo has also been useful in the anti-Lithuania propaganda campaign waged by Moscow through the all-Union media -- particularly on the nightly news program, Vremya -- and in the pages of Pravda, Izvestia, and other Soviet publications. In interviews, members of these two groups have said that developments

in Lithuania are a return to bourgeois nationalism, the end result of which could end up to be fascism, that Russian and Polish minorities in the republic are in great personal danger, that the new Lithuanian leadership is adventurist and unsupported by most of the people in Lithuania.

But the pressure on the Lithuanian leadership has not been limited to name-calling and staking claims to bricks, mortar and printing presses. Although as yet no martyrs, there are already flesh and blood victims in the "war of nerves." All along, the Soviet military has actively searched for and arrested young Lithuanian conscripts -- between 38,000 and 42,000 are believed to have been drafted into the Soviet army -- who deserted their units following the declaration of independence. In a news report on Lithuanian television on April 3, Nikolai Petrushenko, a high ranking Soviet officer, said that about 390 young men did so, adding that 82 conscripts had been caught so far, and that a further 42 gave themselves up on their own free will. These numbers are contradicted by the special Lithuanian Parliament's commission set up after March 11 to help soldiers from Lithuania serving in the Soviet army. As of April 10, close to 700 who had deserted had also registered with the commission; there are no estimates of how many others who deserted and who failed to do so. It is also believed that about 7 - 10 soldiers are caught by Soviet military forces every day. Although the Soviets at first promised that those who returned to their units voluntarily would not face any disciplinary action, this decision was later revoked. To date, all soldiers --whether forcibly or voluntarily returned -- are subject to criminal proceedings. Nevertheless, it is believed that not all will actually be prosecuted, and there will be leniency on a case by case basis.

The most brutal operation to capture the youth occurred at a psychiatric hospital in a suburb of Vilnius, where three dozen (some reports say 38 in all) Lithuanian soldiers were being sheltered in a special Red Cross wing. According to doctors then on duty, at about 3 A.M. on the night of March 27 some 40 armed paratroopers stormed the Naujoji Vilnija hospital and dragged the young men from their beds, beating them severely in the process. The operation took only about fifteen minutes. Twelve youths were abducted immediately; eleven escaped and to date, are in hiding. As of April 10, a dozen youths were still unaccounted for; it is not known whether they were captured or whether they successfully eluded the paratroopers. An ABC television crew arrived at the hospital just minutes after the paratroopers; their videotapes were confiscated at gunpoint. But Lithuanian television later filmed the aftermath -- smashed metal bedframes, broken glass, blood stains on the hospital stairs, bedding, and clothes, with the wail of a woman's voice heard in the background.

The unlucky soldiers were at first said to have been returned to their units. But when some frantic families contacted these units, they were told the soldiers were not there. Although the soldiers' current physical and psychological condition is unknown, their whereabouts have since been established. On March 31, many families have received identically worded telegrams saying "I am alive and well. I will write more details as well as my return address in a letter." The telegrams were all sent from Anadyr. Anadyr is on the Bering Sea, almost directly across from Nome, Alaska.

### The Will of the People

In addition to his ultimatum to the Lithuanian leadership, Gorbachev issued a second statement on March 31, this one directed to the people of Lithuania. His tone was somewhat more conciliatory, but nevertheless still determined. He once again condemned the activities of the Lithuanian Parliament, explaining that he called upon it to revoke its "illegal acts" and expressing the hope that "the citizens of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic will agree with my appeal."

There were moments, however, in this second statement where Gorbachev sounded more plaintive than threatening -- revealing, perhaps, the perplexity and downright hurt many Russians must feel about the Lithuanian rejection of their Union. "We lived for many years as one family," Gorbachev stated. "Are these times worth only bad words? Has Lithuanian literature, poetry, theater and cinema, music and architecture, education and sports paled away from the palette of Soviet culture? Wasn't it through common efforts, by fraternally helping other republics, that your industry and agriculture developed? Did not Lithuania herself extend a friendly hand to other peoples during difficult moments? Wasn't it the voices of Lithuania's citizens that supported the Soviet Constitution, which for many years Lithuania, enjoying all rights as a fully fledged Republic, followed in a conscientious and orderly fashion?"

Whether Gorbachev expected concrete answers to these rhetorical questions is unknown -- but he got them nevertheless. A day later, Vytautas Landsbergis suggested on television that perhaps it would be only polite if the people of Lithuania -- to whom after all Gorbachev had addressed his statement -- responded to it. Landsbergis also asked that copies of whatever they wrote be sent to the Lithuanian Parliament.

In the next few days, post offices across Lithuania were jammed with people sending telegrams to the Kremlin. At one local post office in Vilnius, an exasperated telegraph operator said on Tuesday afternoon, April 3, that she was still unable to process all the telegrams she had accepted by noon on Monday, April 2. The one line she had to Moscow -- routed through the central Vilnius

post office -- was constantly busy. Vilnius Central Post Office itself added an additional five people just to handle the volume.

By Tuesday, April 3, over 150,000 copies -- overwhelmingly supporting Lithuanian independence -- had also been received at the Lithuanian Parliament. By Friday, April 6, that had doubled to 300,000. But administrative personnel at the Parliament estimated that after all were counted, there would be between 400,000 and half a million copies of telegrams. They also claimed that these numbers actually represented at least four times as many people: One telegram was often signed by a family, a circle of friends or colleagues, or the inhabitants of an entire apartment building. (At a press conference on April 11, Landsbergis stated that over 1 million telegrams had been sent to the Kremlin. That sounds inflated.) Only a handful of telegrams, it was reported, condemned the acts of the Lithuanian parliament.

As if to underline this show of solidarity, Landsbergis called together a rally for Saturday, April 7 in Vilnius to support the work of the Lithuanian Parliament. 300,000 people from across Lithuania showed up in Vingis Park, where the first Sajudis open-air meeting had been held less than two years before. A Soviet helicopter flew low, scattering the by now well-known anti-Lithuanian leaflets, and cutting a few telephone lines in the process. That weekend, Moscow's news program Vremya broadcast a story about the unpopularity of the work of the Lithuanian parliament in the republic. It cited a letter signed by 41 discontented Komsomol members belonging to the LCP/CPSU Platform, which called for direct presidential rule to be introduced into Lithuania.

Still, the positive reaction to Landsbergis' calls for support during the first week of April was impressive, all the more so because of the reservations many Lithuanians have had about the speed and manner in which the newly elected parliament pushed through the declaration of independence.

In a study conducted between March 28 and April 2 by the Public Opinion Research Center of the Lithuanian Academy of Science, 91% of the 1583 respondents surveyed said that they supported the Lithuanian Parliament's declaration. But 31% believed that it had been made too soon.

A substantial number of people, therefore, are wary about the way this holiest of goals was handled by the Lithuanian Parliament. They would have preferred more caution. Many hold Landsbergis and the Sajudis-controlled parliament at least partially responsible for the alarming events which have followed in the wake of the declaration. Yet there is also a strong sense amongst the population that Moscow is trying to exploit this point of view to undermine the Lithuanian leadership and isolate it from the people. Such a tactic has so far been unsuccessful. Even on the most tragic

and emotionally charged issue -- the fate of the abducted Lithuanian soldiers who deserted their Soviet army units -- many families of the soldiers hold the Soviet military, rather than the Lithuanian leadership, as solely responsible.

In this sense, Moscow's threats and retaliatory measures have backfired, unifying Lithuanian society as they have the two principal adversarial forces -- Sajudis and the LCP -- in Lithuania's political life. The more the tension between Vilnius and the Kremlin has escalated, the more the criticism about the way the new Lithuanian leadership has handled its first month in power has been muted. But it has not evaporated.

### Sajudis vs. LCP

There were many bruised feelings in the Lithuanian political arena after the February 24th elections. These centered around Algirdas Brazauskas, who -- ironically for a Communist Party leader today -- is personally more popular than Sajudis' Vytautas Landsbergis. Despite the party's defeat in the elections, there was a strong sentiment amongst many people, even those outside of the LCP, that Brazauskas at least should have been elected President of the Lithuanian Parliament anyway. (He actually held the post for a number of months, up until the newly elected parliament convened on March 10.) Petitions began to be circulated -- many spontaneously, some probably organized by the LCP -- supporting his candidacy, sometimes even calling for direct elections to the job. Some Sajudis activists charged that the LCP purposely instigated this petition campaign to undermine both Sajudis' electoral victory and to challenge the legitimacy of Sajudis' mandate to declare independence.

With such a clear majority in Parliament, Sajudis need not have worried. Brazauskas' loss of the presidency to Landsbergis was expected. Still, it smarted. Minutes after his own victory was secured on March 11, Landsbergis offered Brazauskas one of three deputy presidency positions. Landsbergis made the offer in Parliament, repeating it the following day. Brazauskas refused both times. (From all I could gather, Brazauskas had not been privately approached with the offer before it was made publicly.) He left for Moscow the evening of March 12 to attend, now as an observer rather than a deputy, the Extraordinary Third Session of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies where he also met briefly with Gorbachev. In Brazauskas' absence, other LCP parliamentarians formed what they called "The Harmony Club" as a counterweight to Sajudis' Deputies Club, which had formed almost immediately after February 24. It didn't take long for the two clubs to come into conflict.

The excuse they needed was soon at hand. On Tuesday, March 13, a few Sajudis deputies introduced a move to replace the head of the Lithuanian Television and Radio Committee, Domijonas

Sniukas, with Algirdas Kauspeda, a member of Sajudis' council. (The choice of Kauspeda as a candidate was curious. An architect by profession, Kauspeda is also the leader of the most famous rock band in Lithuania, Antis.) Sniukas, on the other hand, was an LCP member. He had been in the job for about a year and was generally perceived to be competent and politically tolerant. He was also in Moscow when the move to replace him was made. Coupled with Brazauskas' humiliating defeat, this was too much for the LCP to bear.

The forum they chose to argue it all out, however, was not during the debate on how Lithuanian TV and radio should be run in the future and who should run it. A seemingly innocuous appeal to the people of Lithuania, calling for harmony and unity and drafted by a Sajudis deputy, was the chosen field of battle. And the spark that set things off was that the appeal also urged all petition campaigns calling for direct elections to the presidency of the Parliament be halted. Although not specifically mentioned, the Brazauskas petition campaign was clearly the target. Incensed, the LCP quickly formulated its own alternative appeal to the people of Lithuania. It also called for harmony and unity, but mentioned nothing about calling off any kind of petition campaign. And then, in the name of harmony and unity, the fun began.

People across Lithuania, glued to their television sets -- the first days of the parliamentary sessions were televised live -- watched the deputies go at one another. Some Harmony Club members accused Sajudis of practicing the same old dictatorship under a new banner. Some Sajudis-backed deputies retorted that the LCP were just sore losers, who couldn't get used to the fact that they were defeated in the elections. A few deputies said that the parliament should pass neither appeal, because if the parliament was unable to work harmoniously, how could it ask the nation to do so?

There was, unfortunately, truth in all those accusations. They spelled a parliamentary mini-crisis in the making, barely past the third day of Lithuania's declared independence. During a closed plenary session on Tuesday evening, March 14, criticisms flew back and forth, this time without a nationwide audience. "It was during those two hours that I really felt at home for the first time in this parliament," admitted a high-ranking LCP member to me later. The closed door session did -- at least temporarily -- diffuse the tension. The following day, Wednesday, March 14, a chastened LCP retracted its alternative appeal for harmony, and with slight revisions, accepted the Sajudis-backed one. (The call to end the petition campaign stayed in the revised appeal.) Soon after, the LCP itself formally requested people to stop collecting signatures Brazauskas' behalf.

The same day, Domijonas Sniukas, back from Moscow, addressed the Parliament. "I get the strange impression that even though not so long ago we were called a Sajudis nest (at the TV and radio stations), that that opinion is changing. I conscientiously performed my duties, did not hinder, and perhaps even helped the developing processes (in society). And now our (Radio and TV) committee truly threatens neither Lithuanian independence nor the parliament..." On March 22, Parliament buried the issue by creating a commission made of parliamentarians and officials from Lithuanian TV and Radio. Sniukas was named to the commission, and to date, still heads the Lithuanian Radio and Television Committee.

Upon returning from Moscow on March 14, Brazauskas, although visibly uncomfortable, appeared together with Landsbergis on television. They both appealed to the population for -- you guessed it -- harmony and unity.

But given that the entire parliamentary ruckus had been televised, the public was not so easily calmed down. Two scathing columns, one penned by a well-respected novelist, Romualdas Granauskas, the other by a former Sajudis inner circle member Arvydas Juozaitis, were published within a day or two. Granauskas, referring to Landsbergis as "One Person", mocked the self-important seriousness of the Sajudis parliamentarians. Juozaitis criticized the Sajudis wrestle for power. In what he called a historical mistake, he maintained that Brazauskas should have been voted president of the Parliament, notwithstanding the LCP's minority status. Because of their majority in the Parliament, Juozaitis argued, Sajudis still could have pushed through the declaration of independence.

An open statement from several Lithuanian journalists was published March 15 and 16, reflecting their nervousness about the attempted takeover of the TV and Radio. "The Union of Lithuania's Journalists...expresses concern about the fate of democracy in Lithuania," the statement said. "It would be difficult to find one person amongst Lithuanian journalists who espouses ill views towards his nation... Our anxiety is raised by the parliamentary attempts to restrict freedom of speech and press. How else could one understand the group of Lithuanian Parliament deputies, having no (parliamentary) authorization, which was formed to observe the workings of the Television and Radio?"

Even more interesting than the letter itself was the mix of people who signed it. There were, of course, a number who had been mild reformers in the LCP apparatus, who were never identified with the Sajudis movement and whose protest was to be expected. But they were joined by others. There was Linas Medelis, the editor in chief of the weekly Atgimimas (Rebirth), the first newspaper that Sajudis founded. There was Vale Cepleviciute, a journalist from Respublika, the first independent daily in the country, and also the second newspaper that Sajudis founded. There was Arvydas Juozaitis, one

of the three publishers of Siaures Atenai (Athens of the North) who until last November had been in Sajudis' inner circles himself. There were, in other words, several individuals who normally would never have come together as allies. Nor was it usual for Sajudis sympathizers to criticize the movement's leaders in quite so public a way.

But they were not alone. They were joined by academics and intellectuals, many who also were both active Sajudis supporters and sympathizers. They signed a second open letter, calling for a coalition government. "The voters of Lithuania put a great deal of hope into the elections of a new parliament," the letter stated. "Our disquiet and concern are raised by the impatience, authoritarian tendencies, narrow clannishness, the lack of desire to listen to an opponent. These are very dangerous tendencies which can introduce a dictatorship of one's own views. All this helps to destroy Sajudis' moral authority."

But perhaps the most authoritative and reasoned warning came from 94-year old Juozas Urbsys. As the last foreign minister of independent Lithuania fifty years ago, he personally had been forced to accept the ultimatums delivered to Lithuania by both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in 1939. In an open letter published in the daily newspaper, Lithuanian Morning, on March 20, Urbsys advised the new leadership to cool it. "Do not throw rocks under the feet of the LCP, and do not resort to name-calling just because the party calls itself Communist. The name that this party bears helps it to fight with those certain forces which are opposed to Lithuania's independence," said Urbsys. (Note: Urbsys himself was in Soviet prisons for almost thirteen years -- eleven in isolation.)

One month later Lithuania's parliamentarians still have not entirely settled into their new roles.

"Sajudis is still playing by the rules of an opposition party," says Algis Kumza, himself an LCP member as well as a member of City of Vilnius Sajudis Council. "That part of Sajudis which is (in the Parliament) now still does not realize that it is no longer in opposition, but in 'position'. It is the government. And there are different rules to this game. On the other hand, the Party still does not realize that it has gone from 'position' into opposition." This, adds Kumza, often results in the party expressing "a certain kind of exaggerated criticism of the Parliament."

During the past month, however, Moscow has helped Sajudis and the LCP find unity -- if not harmony.

### The New Lithuanian Government

During the past month, the Lithuanian leadership has, at least within the halls of Parliament, tried to act like the independent leadership it declared itself to be. "You must remember that what we are making here is a revolution," Landsbergis told the deputies at one point during the first days of the new session.

It has at times been slow going. The parliament is also learning democracy by doing, with all the attendant frustrations and mistakes. During plenary sessions, in keeping with the spirit of democracy, deputies fiercely defend their right to say what they want, for as long as they want, on just about anything they want. (They are thankfully kept somewhat in line by a sharply-tongued Sajudis plenary session moderator from Kaunas, Aleksandras Abišalas). Many less rhetorically inclined colleagues complain that plenary sessions are more like open-air rallies rather than meetings of the legislative branch of a government. Some deputies, mindful of how well it goes down with the voters, often cannot help shaking their fists at the Kremlin and engaging in imprudent name-calling. Legislation often gets bogged down when a substantial number of the over 130 parliamentarians offers editorial revisions on the wording of certain documents -- down to commas and conjunctions -- making their passage a drawn-out, painful process.

Nevertheless, in the space of one month, Parliament formed a new government as well as its own working commissions. The foundations of an infrastructure of a new state have been laid. Sajudis executive committee member and economist Kazimiera Prunskiene was elected Prime Minister on March 17. Algirdas Brazauskas and Romualdas Ozolas were voted deputy prime ministers the same day. The number of ministries in Lithuania was reduced from over 40 to 17, and by the first week of April, all ministerial posts had been filled. On March 22, Arturas Paulauskas was appointed Chief Prosecutor for Lithuania. Parliament formed a commission of deputies to be its official representatives in Moscow. The commission is headed by a young prosecutor Egidijus Eickauskas, an even-tempered and diplomatic individual who has had the sorry job of having one door after another slammed in his face there.

A temporary Basic Law has been adopted, pending debate on a permanent Constitution. Several laws and resolutions were passed, ranging in spectrum from establishing the official name and State Emblem of Lithuania to reorganizing state enterprises to making a volunteer army, air force and marine accountable to the Parliament.

Vytautas Landsbergis regularly opens a plenary session with a report on the current political situation in Lithuania. Despite his generally mild and low-key style, Landsbergis often weaves ironic nuances into his statements, particularly when speaking

about the Soviet Union, giving them just the touch of an edge that Brazauskas, by comparison, never did. These nuances in approach extended to written communications with Mikhail Gorbachev. Until the end of March, Gorbachev was addressed as "Jusu prakilnybe" in official telegrams, letters and other documents (the closest translation into English is "Your Excellency", but a more literal one would be "your most high" or "your nobleness" ). It was rumored here that Gorbachev was almost more incensed by that -- apparently the Russian translation has a sneering nuance to it -- than by the declaration of independence itself.

To mark the first month of independence, the leadership pledged their allegiance to the Lithuanian Republic on April 11.  
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(Note: I wrote the following commentary for the English-language newspaper in Vilnius, Lithuanian Review.)

#### MY OWN VIEW: REALPOLITIK OR IDEALPOLITIK?

In this fifth week after the new Lithuanian leadership declared independence on March 11 two words have been heard here almost daily. As aggressive Soviet saber-rattling has followed in the wake of this declaration, the Lithuanian leadership has urged people to maintain their "kantrybe" (patience) and "istverme" (endurance).

So far, people have done just that. Lithuanians continued their daily lives as Soviet helicopters scattering anti-independence leaflets whirred overhead; as Soviet soldiers, armed with automatic weapons occupied one public building after another; as Soviet tanks rumbled noisily both through city streets and the countryside.

Yet, given the speed in which independence was suddenly declared in March, patience and endurance were exactly what were suspended by the new leadership itself. It thereby demonstrated that it was not following Realpolitik -- a policy based on recognizing existing power structures -- but Idealpolitik -- a policy based on idealism, on a vision of what should be. It was heeding the call of a revolutionary trumpet.

That trumpet -- at least temporarily -- drowned out those voices who warned that Lithuania was still unprepared to take this step. Yet, at that moment, the new leaders probably could not have done otherwise. Who can really say that declaring independence on March 11 was premature? Lithuanians have waited long time for this holiest of goals to be realized.

Two generations were born and raised while, invisibly and silently, Lithuania mourned the independence snatched away 50 years ago. Two years have passed from the first time when Lithuanians, grieving aloud and together, publicly broke that silence -- rediscovering each other, and the society they had lost along with their independence. (In that time, practically all of Eastern

Europe has broken free from Soviet control.) But still, only a bare two weeks -- from February 24 to March 11, 1990 -- were allotted by Sajudis, the victors of the elections to the Lithuanian Parliament, to prepare for the return of independence to Lithuania.

Therein lies an irony common to almost all revolutions, whether violent or peaceful: They never happen when you think they will. The source of a revolution's moral power -- the unflinching resolve to throw off repression -- is almost always also the source of its limitations as well.

Today, this leadership is confronted with the dilemma of how to make its declared independence real. It needs the cooperation of a very unwilling partner -- the Soviet Union -- who stands to lose more than she gains, knows this, and doesn't like it. In the face of real Soviet aggression, the Lithuanian leadership has continued to use only the language of Idealpolitik -- issuing proclamations, registering protests, holding rallies. These are all peaceful, non-violent reactions. The Lithuanian leadership is, without a doubt, totally justified in resorting to them.

But is it wise? If the only signals that it sends to the Kremlin are indignant, it can hamper its own stated goal of beginning negotiations with the Soviet Union. The essence of Realpolitik is that in order to serve one's own interests, one must recognize the need to find common ground with an adversary. Calling for these negotiations has been the leadership's most substantial gesture to Realpolitik. The negotiations are absolutely necessary if independence is to be woven into the fabric of everyday life in Lithuania.

The Lithuanian leadership, of course, knows this. It also knows that there are many powerful Soviet forces which have concrete reasons to jeopardize such negotiations. The Lithuanian leadership cannot afford, through Idealpolitik, to aid such forces.

When they were the voice of an opposition movement, the current leadership followed a strategy that was as pragmatic as it was idealistic. And it worked. But that balance has shifted dramatically since the advent of the Sajudis-controlled parliament. Adherents of Realpolitik -- both within and outside Sajudis -- have been uninfluential, if not voiceless.

That this has awakened disquiet -- in a society almost unanimously committed to the vision and ideals of independence -- has not gone unnoticed. In a study conducted between March 28 and April 2 by the Public Opinion Research Center at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, an overwhelming 91% of the 1583 respondents surveyed supported the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence. But 31% of them also believed that it had been declared too soon. And while 76% of the people surveyed said they were satisfied with the work of the Lithuanian Parliament so far, almost half of those -- 34 % -- nevertheless said that satisfaction was only partial.

The skepticism that these numbers reveal begins with the declaration of independence itself. Why was there such a rush? What was burning? If Lithuania had waited patiently for fifty years, why

should a few more months, even another year, matter? Why jump now "naked into the nettles" when soon one might be able to walk through them fully clothed?

There are many answers, on many levels. Some people -- many with their own political axe to grind -- maintain that declaring independence was the vehicle Sajudis deputies used to secure the power they had won at the ballot box. There is some basis for such accusations. In the two weeks that Sajudis, now as the majority voice, prepared its program for the first session of the new parliament, the independent Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) was almost totally ignored. Sajudis perceived the LCP as its primary political adversary, and who consults with one's adversaries in setting up a new government? The LCP, not surprizingly, felt bruised and abused. During the first few days of this new session, the tension between the LCP deputies and those backed by Sajudis was there for all to see.

Still, the accusations that declaring independence was primarily a Sajudis power play neither suffice, nor do justice to the movement's leaders. They had the courage to stand by their convictions. And there was, after all, a mandate from the people of Lithuania.

The Sajudis deputies in the Lithuanian leadership argue that independence had to be declared, either now or never. They point to Mikhail Gorbachev being voted Soviet President by the Third Extraordinary Session of the Congress of People's Deputies in mid-March. They maintain that Gorbachev, with additional wide-ranging dictatorial powers, could prevent Lithuania from realizing independence in the future.

Still another argument was voiced by Kazimiera Prunskiene -- now Prime Minister -- in the final hours before independence was declared: Lithuania's newly elected parliament needed to define who it was, what it stood for, and what it wanted. And it needed to say so to the world and to Lithuania itself.

None of these arguments were necessarily true -- they were interpretive, rather than dispassionate assessments of current political conditions. Gorbachev could and can move against Lithuania any time he wants to, whether he is President of the Soviet Union or not. And there is no confusion in the world today about what Lithuania wants. There was therefore no international reason -- only a domestic one -- to remind it once again.

Yet such views were nevertheless decisive. They created a momentum that made it impossible not to declare independence on March 11. Why?

They spoke to Lithuanian nightmares, evoking fears that haunt a people who have been gagged for half a century. To understand their power, consider what happened in 1940.

At that time, when Lithuania was pressured into joining the Soviet Union, her last independent leadership decided to acquiesce silently, hoping it could save lives. It didn't save any. The

catastrophe that followed -- with its political terror, murder, war, mass arrests and deportations -- was then doubly terrifying. Lithuania had lost her voice. Unable to protest, she was forgotten by the world. And the world, at least officially, was informed that she was happy.

Lithuania's new leaders in 1990 -- the first true representatives of her people in 50 years -- couldn't let that happen again. When they were handed the first realistic opportunity to reestablish independence, they took it. The ghosts from the past were powerful.

Yet it is crucial to recognize these ghosts for what they are, to name them, and to analyse just how much relevance they have on Lithuania's political situation today. One must, in other words, put both the ideals one holds dear, as well as bitter historical lessons, in context.

Idealpolitik was the political trumpet that heralded independence in March. Yet Realpolitik must return to the political arena if that trumpet's echo is to be heard in all the months and years ahead.

There is no other way.

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**CHRONICLE: March 11 - April 11, 1990**

March 11 At 10:44 p.m., the newly elected Lithuanian Parliament reestablishes Lithuanian statehood.

March 15 Shortly after 10:00 a.m., Mikhail Gorbachev's election to the presidency of the Soviet Union is announced at the Extraordinary Third Session of the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow. Late in the day the Congress passes a resolution condemning the activities of the Lithuanian Parliament as "having no legal juridical force". The resolution calls for the "guarantee to defend the rights of every person living in Lithuania as well as (to guarantee) that the rights and interests of the Soviet Union and the Soviet republics will be abided." Gorbachev gives Lithuania three days to respond.

March 17 Economist and Sajudis leader Kazimiera Prunskiene is elected Prime Minister. First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party Algirdas Brazauskas and Sajudis leader Romualdas Ozolas are elected Deputy Prime Ministers. Formation of the new government begins. Ministries will be reduced from 42 to 17.

Vytautas Landsbergis announces the first unusual Soviet troop movements in Lithuania to the Parliament. Soviet army helicopters fly over Vilnius for one hour,

March 17 scattering pro-Soviet leaflets.

Telephone communications to the West blocked for several days; when reestablished, sporadic blockade thereafter

March 18 Landsbergis sends a telegram to Gorbachev in response to statement by Extraordinary Third Session of Congress of People's Deputies. He states the Congress has no legal foundation to declare Lithuania's moves illegal; that human rights are guaranteed by the laws of the Lithuanian Republic which conform to international practices and agreements; that the Lithuanian government is taking steps to maintain law and order.

March 20 The Baltic Region Military Command announces that all Lithuanian soldiers who deserted their units must return to them or else "measures will be taken to return them by force."

March 21 Mikhail Gorbachev issues a decree demanding that all personal hunting weapons owned by citizens of Lithuania be turned over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs within seven days; travel to and from Lithuania by foreigners severely restricted

In a letter to Landsbergis, Gorbachev calls upon him to halt the formation of a volunteer military force in Lithuania. Under the auspices of Sajudis, about 2,000 individuals "Savanoriai" registered to join such a force.

March 22 Arturas Paulauskas is named Chief Prosecutor of the Lithuanian Republic by parliament

Parliament takes over control from Sajudis for registering individuals to form volunteer army, air force and marines in Lithuania, and in effect suspends their activities

March 23 Eleven Ministry posts filled

Parliament holds emergency all-night session; at about 3:30 A.M., a full Soviet tank division enters Vilnius;

Accompanied by armed Soviet soldiers, pro-Moscow LCP faction occupies three buildings whose ownership is claimed both by Moscow and the independent LCP. Included are: Vilnius City CP headquarters and two district party headquarters in Vilnius (October & Lenin)

March 24 Municipal and regional elections held throughout Lithuania

March 24 In a letter to Gorbachev, Landsbergis states that the Soviet leader is misinformed about the "Savanoriai" volunteer force. "People who agreed to help maintain public order and to control the roads, should the need arise, registered," wrote Landsbergis, adding that in no case were there any formal units, nor was there any questions about the "Savanoriai" being armed.

March 25 About 30 armed paratroopers occupy the Higher Party School in Vilnius, which had been turned over by the independent LCP to the Pedagogical Institute less than two weeks previously

The Institute for Marxism-Leninism is likewise occupied by Soviet soldiers

March 26 The independent LCP holds a plenum in Vilnius

March 27 At 3:30 A.M., about 40 armed Soviet paratroopers raid the Red Cross wing of the Naujosios Vilnijos (New Vilnius) psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of the city. They beat and abduct 12 Lithuanian deserters immediately, capturing an additional 11 others later who initially managed to elude them. 12 others successfully escape.

At about 6:00 A.M., Soviet paratroopers abduct two more Lithuanian soldiers from the Ziegzdriu Red Cross Hospital near Kaunas. They are later returned.

At 7 A.M., about 40 armed Soviet paratroopers occupy the independent LCP Central Committee headquarters on Gediminas Prospect in downtown Vilnius, eight hours after the LCP finished its Plenum

About 6,000 attend pro-Soviet rally sponsored by "Citizen's Committee of the USSR" next to the Lithuanian Parliament. Pro-Moscow LCP faction leader Vladislav Shved tells crowd "You can't occupy what is already legally yours."

March 28 Polish Prime Minister Mazowiecki offers Poland as a neutral territory for negotiations between Lithuania and the USSR.

March 30 Soviet Internal Ministry soldiers occupy the Press House, where over 40 major daily and weekly newspapers in Lithuania are published.

March 30 Armed Soviet soldiers occupy the Institute of Party History

- March 31 Gorbachev issues ultimatum to Lithuanian leadership to revoke March 11 independence declaration and all other acts as a condition to begin dialogue; also issues appeal directly to the people of Lithuania calling on their support
- Landsbergis accepts President Vaclav Havel's offer to host negotiations between Lithuania and the USSR in Czechoslovakia
- April 1 Additional Soviet troops and several dozen armoured personnel carriers arrive in Vilnius
- Almost all foreign journalists leave Vilnius after Moscow bureaus of the Western press are threatened with closure if they do not
- April 2 Deputy Prime Minister Romualdas Ozolas, Mecys Laurinkus and Romas Gudaitis go to Moscow to speak with Soviet officials. They meet with Alexander Yakovlev, but fail to meet with Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov.
- April 7 300,000 people attend a mass rally to support activities of the Lithuanian Parliament; Soviet army helicopter scatters anti-Lithuanian leaflets overhead
- April 8 Palm Sunday. At about 5:30 A.M., three truckloads of Soviet troops arrive at the Press House in an attempt to stop publication of various newspapers. Thousands of people gather in the early morning to form a picket; troops withdraw by 11:30 A.M. A 24-hour vigil to guard the Press House is instituted; it turns into a rock around the clock festival by evening and throughout the night of April 8 - 9.
- April 9 Soviet Presidential Council declares that "political, economic and other measures" will be used against Lithuania for its anti-Constitutional behavior
- April 10 Vytautas Landsbergis sends a pleading telegram to Gorbachev which reads, "We are very concerned that ultra-rightist imperial forces are compelling you to take a wrong step -- to continue the wrongs of the 1940's in the Baltics. Do not further this, please; in the name of peace, justice and concord on earth, do not do this."
- April 11 The Lithuanian Parliament and Council of Ministers pledge oath of allegiance to the Lithuanian Republic.

**ADDENDUM**

Selected findings from a survey conducted between March 28 and April 2 by the Public Opinion Research Center of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

**TABLE 1: DECLARING LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE**

Question: The Lithuanian Parliament passed an act for the reestablishment of the Lithuanian state on March 11 this year. What do you think of this act?

	Total	Lithuanian	Non-Lithuanian
	%	%	%
I support it	59	69	18
I support it, but I think it was declared too soon	31	28	45
I do not support it	9	3	33
No answer	1,3	0,7	3,4

**TABLE 2: VIEWS ON SOVIET REACTIONS**

Question: What is your opinion about the Soviet leadership's declaration on the reestablishment of the Lithuanian state? (The declaration is the one made by the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies on March 15, where Lithuanian independence was declared illegal.)

	Total	Lithuanian	Non-Lithuanian
	%	%	%
This declaration was illegal and undemocratic	53	60	27
What else could the Soviet leadership have done?	16	13	24
The declaration is legal	15	11	31
Don't Know	15	15	15
No answer	1,7	1,4	3,1

**TABLE 3: VIEWS ON THE LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT**

Question: The newly elected Lithuanian Parliament is now working. Does it justify your expectations?

	Total	Lithuanian	Non-Lithuanian
	%	%	%
Yes, I am satisfied with the new Parliament	42	51	11
I am only partially satisfied	34	37	24
I am completely dissatisfied	11	6	33
No opinion	12	6	31
No answer	1	0,6	1,8

**TABLE 4: LITHUANIA'S POLITICAL LEADERS**

Question: Which individuals best represent Lithuania's interests at this time? (open-ended question)

	Total	Total (Jan)
	%	%
Algirdas Brazauskas First Secretary of Communist Party Deputy Prime Minister	59	73
Vytautas Landsbergis President of the Lithuanian Parliament; Sajudis chairman	45	12
Kazimiera Prunskiene Prime Minister; economist; Sajudis leader	44	47
Romualdas Ozolas Deputy Prime Minister; Sajudis leader	20	6
Kazimieras Motieka Deputy Chmn. in Parliament; Sajudis leader	19	15

**TABLE 5: CONVINCING MOSCOW**

Question: Is it necessary to take additional steps to convince Moscow that a majority of people want a free Lithuania?

	Total	Lithuanian	Non-Lithuanian
	%	%	%
No. Elections to the Parliament & earlier petitions for ejecting the occupying army, etc. are already proof	69	74	19
Yes. Additional proof is necessary, ie. referendum *	27	18	63
Don't Know	9	7	15
No answer	0,9	0,6	2,1

\*The actual wording of this answer was "...ie, a questioning of inhabitants." It is an interesting nuance that the word referendum, which means the same thing, was not used. Sajudis has consistently maintained that a referendum is not needed to prove that the March 11 declaration of independence expressed the will of Lithuania's people. It is one of the most sensitive political issues at the moment. This question, was formulated and submitted for inclusion into the survey by Sajudis.

**TABLE 6: THE HISTORICAL RECORD**

Question: Do you agree that Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940 against her will?

	Total	Lithuanian	Non-Lithuanian
	%	%	%
Yes	65	75	26
No	14	10	30
Don't Know	21	15	43
No answer	0,5	0,4	0,9

Question:           **How do you evaluate M. Gorbachev's political activities?**

This was a question measured by a ten-point scale. -5 was very bad, 0 was neutral, and +5 was very good. Answers -- Total respondents: -1,4; Lithuanians -2,1 ; non-Lithuanians +1,6. (This was a massive drop in Gorbachev's popularity in Lithuania. In a survey conducted in January, Gorbachev's overall popularity rating at that time was +55.

Note: Gorbachev's ultimatum to the Lithuanian leadership and his appeal to the Lithuanian people were both announced during the four day period (March 28 - April 2) that this survey was conducted.

### Demographic Information

Personal interviews were conducted with 1583 respondents age 18 and over. They were chosen by random sampling from voter registration records. (Interviews generally lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour.) The demographic profile of the respondents closely matches that of Lithuania's inhabitants as a whole (1989 census).

	<u>Survey</u>	<u>1989 Census</u>
	%	%
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	46	46
Female	54	54
<u>Residence</u>		
Urban	68	68
Rural	32	32
<u>Age</u>		
18 - 29	21	25
30 - 49	41	37
50 +	38	38
<u>Education</u>		
Elementary	22	?
Did not complete secondary school	13	?
Secondary school	28	?
Technical	21	21
University & postgraduate	16	13
<u>Ethnic Composition</u>		
Lithuanian	79	80
Russian	9	9
Polish	8	7
Byelorussian	2	2
Other	1	2