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TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

by Ina Navazelskis

It had been a long day, at the end of a long week. On the last Friday of June -- the weekday that deputies of the Lithuanian Parliament usually meet with constituents in their electoral districts -- Parliament (aka the Supreme Council) was in special session. The deputies had planned to break for the day at 3:30. Now it was just after 6.00 p.m., with no end in sight. Everyone was tired; everyone was cranky.

The Parliament's president, Vytautas Landsbergis, made a mild attempt at levity. "We work overtime, we get no milk, what can you do," he said in mock complaint. "We get only criticisms, but still, we must do our duty." And he smiled slightly.

Yet that hint of a smile, playing around the corners of his mouth, soon disappeared. Indeed, Landsbergis himself was more than a little testy. The question under debate was the most critical since the newly elected Parliament, in its first full day of work, voted to reestablish the independent Lithuanian state last March 11. And Landsbergis did not find it any more amusing than did any of the 108 deputies who registered their attendance for that morning's session.

The issue was whether to accept a moratorium on that March 11 declaration of independence. A moratorium was just the latest word floated. Freezing, halting, suspending -- all these terms had been debated, in the press if not always in the Parliament, for almost six weeks. All, to an outside observer, meant more or less the same thing. In order for the Soviet Union to sit down at the negotiating table with the Lithuanians, the Vilnius government had to make THE major concession of its 110 day existence: It had to back away from that act. Yet for many, the formal declaration was as sacred as the goal it symbolized. In such circumstances, it didn't really matter what terms one decided to use -- all were anathema to the Lithuanians.

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Still, some were more so than others. "Freezing" for example, had particularly odious connotations. As one young bureaucrat explained, in the Lithuanian sub-conscious it had associations with Siberia's Arctic wastelands, where tens of thousands of Lithuanians froze to death after being deported there in the 1940's. Deputy Kazys Saja, a writer and playwright, attacked "freezing" early on. "What does this freezing mean?" he rhetorically asked, "as if (we were talking about) an egg, which we incubated and hatched. You know what happens when you freeze it -- after that noone will ever be able to thaw it out."

But the issue did not melt away, much as the deputies and most everybody else wanted it to. Throughout the spring, Mikhail Gorbachev left little doubt that what he demanded was the one thing the Lithuanians maintained was non-negotiable. But Gorbachev insisted there would be no talks (there might, however, be some other things, such as direct presidential rule imposed from Moscow) until the Lithuanians gave in. Over two months passed before he even agreed to meet with a Lithuanian official.

As time went on, Gorbachev did become somewhat more flexible. In March, he categorically demanded that Lithuania revoke the act outright. By May, he stated that Lithuania need only suspend it. In June, she should simply return to her (pre-declaration) status of March 10; that is, as one of the fifteen Soviet Socialist Republics. If the Lithuanians refused to outright invalidate their independence declaration, they could at least ignore it. It wasn't much, but such was the Soviet leader's gesture toward compromise -- until the final week of June.

In Lithuania, the debate on the new word -- moratorium -- had begun somewhat earlier, triggered (some parliamentarians bitterly contended that it was more like foisted) by Prime Minister Prunskiene. On June 16, on behalf of the entire Lithuanian Council of Ministers, she sent a letter, with draft proposal, to the Parliament. It was short and to the point. It read:

> "For the duration of negotiations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Republic proclaims a temporary moratorium on the March 11 Act (which was passed) by the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Republic reestablishing the independent Lithuanian State."

The proposal immediately dominated public discussion in the press, radio and television, as well as private circles of friends. But it did not end up on the agenda for general debate in the Parliament's plenary session until Thursday afternoon, June 28 -- almost two weeks later. It was parliamentary foot-dragging -- by now quite familiar -- at its best.

The Spring of Our Discontent

Such foot-dragging began exactly six weeks before, when Prunskiene returned from her 15-day whirlwind trip to the West, having met with American, Canadian and Western European leaders. Then, as now, she was the catalyst for forcing an extremely reluctant Parliament to face an extremely distasteful issue. It was a thankless, politically unpopular task. And Prunskiene was not shy about reminding her domestic critics of this.

"The Council of Ministers has taken the entire heat", the exasperated Prime Minister complained at one point during the debate in late June. (She was not exaggerating. Cries of "Traitor!" "Enemy of the People" and "Moscow Lackey" were not uncommon, voiced by hard-line radical organizations such as the Lithuanian Liberty League (LLL), some parliamentarians, and even a few members of the clergy.) Nevertheless, Prunskiene decided to gamble her own political future on the acceptance -- in some shape or form -- of a moratorium. Should it fail to pass, there were noises that some more radical parliamentarians would demand her resignation. (Given that on the eve of the March 11 declaration, Prunskiene had urged those deputies who wavered to take the fateful step and declare independence immediately, her position now seemed rather ironic.)

But maybe not. Things had changed. Back in March, the energetic and optimistic Prunskiene -- she said that some in Moscow had dubbed her the "Baltic Bomb" -- confidently told Western reporters she believed negotiations with the Soviet Union could begin by the end of that month.

They did not. Instead, there were Soviet paratroopers taking over public buildings in downtown Vilnius, Soviet tanks in the streets, Soviet helicopters in the skies. There was a Soviet economic blockade. And there was a very loud silence from official government circles in the West. Not only was there no hint of the hoped-for recognition of the new Lithuanian leadership from these quarters, but there were some not-too-well concealed disapproving noises about Lithuanian moves.

But there were also other, at first less obvious, developments. In late June, one young LCP parliamentarian, Algis Kumža, commented that political events in Moscow sometimes seemed almost as far away as those in Washington. It was an astute observation. Notwithstanding constant threats from the Kremlin, after March 11 the Lithuanians -- at least psychologically -- turned inwards. The results were not entirely positive. The new leadership called for unity, but something else entirely developed in practice. There was, on the verbal level, a nasty tendency to brand proponents of more moderate policies as traitors. That epithet was directed in general at the independent Lithuanian Communist Party, and in particular at its First Secretary, Algirdas Brazauskas, now also Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic questions. (A young staunch anti-Communist parliamentarian, Saulius Pečeliūnas, who hailed from a dissident family, became known for

always asking the same question of his political rivals just as they were about to address the plenary session. "When and where did you join the Communist Party?" the light brown haired, bearded Pečeliūnas would intone, hoping to put his hapless target on the defensive. He often succeeded.)

As leader of the LCP, Brazauskas bore the brunt of this backlash. Just half a year ago, he was hero of the day, the bold reform Communist who dared defy Moscow by engineering the split from the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU). But by late spring, Brazauskas was just short of being a political pariah -- at least as far as most of the parliamentarians were concered -- the scapegoat who suffered in silence, paying for 50 years of Communist sin. (That such enforced expiation yielded concrete political benefits for the LCP's adversaries -- those non-Communists and ex-Communists, who now were all fervently anti-Communist -- was not lost on anyone.) Curiously, the rump Lithuanian Communist Party still loyal to Moscow was not nearly as stridently attacked. The explanation, perhaps, lies with Brazauskas' continuing popularity. Although his public profile has diminished to where he was seen or heard from only in his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister, recent public opinion polls showed that he is still more popular than Vytautas Landsbergis. Hence more of a threat.

But the new parliamentarians who attacked Brazauskas did not entirely escape critical scrutiny. Finding themselves at the center of international as well as domestic attention, many deputies simply fell back on the only political tactics they knew -- proposing draft manifestoes and transferring opposition movement rhetoric to the central chamber of Parliament. There were complaints about the pervasive dilettantism of the new Parliament. There were disgruntled murmurings that many merely played at being politicians, but actually were totally unprepared for their jobs, and yet were too arrogant -- or too stupid -- to realize this. (In a painfully accurate send-up of the first days of the Parliament's new session in March, Lithuanian novelist Romualdas Granauskas described some of the solemn proceedings. There were, he wrote, "appeals to the world's...large and average-sized nations, then later to smaller ones, and even later still to completely tiny national minorities, all written in such perfect diplomatic language that even those whose creations they were had considerable difficulty reading them out loud in front of one of six microphones...")

All this was relevant to the role Prime Minister Prunskiene was to play. She, too, had her own complaints about Parliament. As the body which confirms all the officials in the Council of Ministers, Parliament has the right to express a vote of no confidence in it, to recall the Prime Minister and disband the Council. But Prunskiene maintained that Parliament was abusing this built-in check of the administrative branch of government. In public as well as in private, she accused it of overstepping its boundaries, meddling in the affairs of the Council of Ministers, and sometimes -- as in the case of Parliament's Foreign Affairs

Committee and the Council of Ministers' Foreign Ministry duplicating its work.

The long arm of the Parliament even extended to Prunskiene's movements in the West. One parliamentarian was in the United States the evening she flew into Washington before meeting President Bush. He demanded an audience with Prunskiene, so that she could be "briefed" on what to say and do when she met with the President, Congress, and others. As she recalled later, "I had to be at the television station at 7 A.M.. I had a full day of meetings scheduled," and besides, "everything was clear to me, I knew what to do." So Prunskiene did not agree to the meeting. The parliamentarian then sent her an indignant letter promising to bring up her refusal during a plenary session of Parliament.

Many parliamentarians justified such meddling by claiming that the Council of Ministers was still a nest of Communist Party apparatchiks who were loathe to change. They had a point. Eight of the 18 Ministers are members of the Communist Party, and one -- Finance Minister Romualdas Sikorskis -- is truly from the old crowd, having been retained in a post he has held since 1957. And while both Prunskiene and one of her two deputy Prime Ministers, Romualdas Ozolas, were both early executive council members of Sajudis, they just turned in their Party cards themselves this past winter.)

Prunskiene countered such criticisms -- real or threatened (that particular parliamentarian never did go through with his promise) -- with her own. She accused Parliament of wanting "to rule rather than work."

"The Council of Ministers and concrete individuals are expected to subordinate themselves to Parliament," she complained in mid-May, adding with a hint of resignation that unsatisfactory as the situation was, "We will continually return to this question."

She defended the Council of Ministers as being at least professional, pointedly adding that this could not be said about a substantial number of parliamentarians. Her decisions in selecting ministers were based on competency, she maintained, not party affiliation. Parliament's job, she kept repeating throughout the spring, (in increasingly exasperated tones), was only to pass laws. The job of the Council of Ministers was to carry them out. "If they (the parliamentarians) have a better way," Prunskiene combatively argued, "let them do it." But if not, her unspoken message was equally as blunt: Then get off my back.

The Prime Minister, thus, was not a "Baltic Bomb" for nothing. In a battle of wills, she could be as much a match for Parliament as for the Moscow officials who gave her the nickname. The battleground was to be the freeze-suspension-halt-moratorium. It would not be easy; it is questionable whether Prunskiene could have won without last minute help from Vytautas Landsbergis.

But with the Soviet economic blockade tightening its grip by the hour, what was at stake was nothing less than Lithuania's future. So just minutes after her plane touched down in Vilnius on that drizzly Sunday afternoon, May 13, fresh from her Western tour, Prunskiene fired the first volley. Flanked by Vytautas Landsbergis, deputy Prime Minister Romualdas Ozolas and a handful of other officials, she told Lithuanian television reporters that Western leaders now understood Lithuania's position, supported it, and offered reasons to hope that Lithuania's most important aspiration -- political independence -- could be realized. But, she added, "there are limits" to what Lithuania can expect, and that there is no such thing as 100% independence. Lithuania, in other words, needed to rethink her understanding of the concept of freedom.

It was a message Mrs. Prunskiene, sometimes frustrated and embattled, was to repeat again and again. At a packed press conference at the Council of Ministers on May 14, when Lithuanian journalists had the first opportunity to learn about her trip -- for lack of hard currency, none had accompanied her -- she expanded on it.

"Lithuania, in restoring her statehood, (must do) so not on an uninhabited island, but in Europe, together with the processes that are developing (there) and the entire world," Prunskiene said, adding that how Lithuania's affairs develop in the future, "depends on how wisely we work, what decisions we make in regard to the Soviet Union, what stand the Soviet Union holds in regard to us."

"What we now most need is to form within ourselves a level of statehood, a statesmanlike way of thinking and realistic political maturity... so that we will appear to other states as trustworthy partners," she told reporters.

In other words, Lithuania's new politicians had to get off their rhetorical soapbox -- where it was easy to talk about Lithuania`s ancient rights to freedom -- and enter the world of Realpolitik. They had to grow up.

And if there was still anyone in Parliament who doubted that Prunskiene meant THEM, those doubts were dispelled the first time she addressed the plenary session after her trip. She recalled that emigre Lithuanians in Canada had so forcefully suggested to her that the new politicians in Vilnius try to to be "more professional" that she almost took it as an insult.

For once, the normally contentious Parliament was subdued. A special closed plenary session was convened three days after Prunskiene's return, on Wednesday afternoon, May 16, to discuss possible compromises to Moscow. The entire debate, expected to be a free for all, took only a few hours. And in a break from what had become the norm, strict confidentiality was observed. (Parliament had become notorious for its leaks. Parliamentarians often took in small cassette tape recorders to tape confidential sessions for

journalists who themselves were barred. I am one of the guilty who had cornered a few hapless parliamentarians in the past to do so. I had no luck this time.) Guards were placed at all the entrances to the Parliament's central chamber. Meanwhile, a declaration was passed by Parliament, formulated with suggestions from Prunskiene based upon her meetings with Western leaders.

In part, the declaration stated that Lithuania was prepared

> "to temporarily suspend the unilateral realization of those resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania arising from the acts on the restoration of the independent state of Lithuania...Lithuania is prepared to discuss the issue of declaring a transitional period during which state independence would be completely fulfilled."

In other words, the Lithuanian Parliament said that it was ready to begin talking about possible compromises. It did not say it was ready to begin making them.

Although the declaration was purposely not addressed to anyone in particular, the addressee of course was Mikhail Gorbachev. It was therefore embargoed for at least 24 hours, until Gorbachev received it personally from Prunskiene, who left for Moscow immediately after the declaration was passed. On Thursday, May 17, she met with Gorbachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov alone for almost two hours. It was the first time that Gorbachev agreed to meet with a Lithuanian official since March 11, and as Prunskiene later reported, it was not an easy meeting. The Soviet response was, if you are ready, then go ahead and do what you said you were prepared to do.

What did Vytautas Landsbergis think about all this? Speaking in an interview the same day that Prunskiene met with Gorbachev, he said, "We would not wish to call any kind of meeting a concession -- whether this is from our side, or the side of the Soviet Union. From our side, we can offer a transitional period. We are aware and do not expect that tomorrow we will have full control of the government throughout all of Lithuania's territory and along Lithuania's borders... In this document, we foresee that if it will become necessary, the Supreme Council can halt the realization of certain decisions that were made after the declaration of independence."

It was not a very satisfying answer. On the surface, it looked as if Landsbergis backed Prunskiene's moves. But there was little hint of how far he really was prepared to compromise, and what internal domestic Lithuanian forces he supported in this debate. The real question was: why wasn't Landsbergis in Moscow himself? He seemed conspicuously absent from all high level -- at least in the international arena -- discussions. True, while Prunskiene was abroad, Landsbergis was not sitting at home on his hands. He was also meeting with foreign leaders -- such as Latvia's Anatolijs Gorbunovs and Estonia's Edgar Savisaar.

The comparison was not lost on anyone...Had he really been eclipsed by Prunskiene?

It certainly looked that way. The main Lithuanian television news program, Panorama, had reported Prunskiene's activities every evening that she had been in the West. Prunskiene meets Bush, Prunskiene meets Thatcher, Prunskiene meets Kohl. There was even a brief five seconds of Prunskiene, elegantly coiffed -- and no doubt, thoroughly briefed -- fielding Bryant Gumbel's questions on the Today show. (I would venture that only a handful of people in Lithuania knew the significance of the Today show as far as exposure and public relations value in the United States.)

But most did appreciate the exposure she got on Soviet television. On Saturday evening, May 26, the prestigious hourlong Moscow documentary program, "Before and After Midnight" ran a 20 minute profile on Prunskiene. She was shown at home, at the office, in her native village. Details portraying Mrs. Prunskiene sympathetically -- such as highlighting her decision to turn over half her 1000-ruble a month salary to the anti-blockade fund -- were clear attempts to appeal to an impoverished Soviet society sensitive to the material privileges officials enjoy.

Adding this media attention to the newspaper clips that Prunskiene brought back with her from the West -- from the front page of the New York Times, complete with photo of the seated Prunskiene being applauded by members of Congress, to a full page spread in the Style section of the Washington Post to a handful of West German papers, it was logical to assume that Prunskiene was now first among equals in Lithuania....

Although it remained unclear just how much rivalry and how much support there was between them, by mid-May the overall difference in approach between Prunskiene and Landsbergis was already perceptible. He stood on principle; she practiced flexibility. He laced his statements with subtle* irony; she did not mince words.

Nowhere were their differences in style as marked as their public statements regarding the role of Western countries in the Lithuanian crisis. At one point in the spring, Landsbergis had compared President Bush's deliberate non-actions vis a vis Lithuania to Neville Chamberlain's sacrifice of Czechoslovakia to Hitler in 1938. Mrs. Prunskiene made no such comparisons. True, she too was not averse to stating that throughout the post-war years, the Baltic States had often been cynically trotted out by the West whenever any Soviet-bashing was called for, while no real effort was made to support Baltic interests.

But she believed that not only the West suffered from an attitude problem. In her view, Lithuania, too, had to broaden her perspectives. She could only expect other countries to support her more concretely if she realized and accepted that their own future interests could not be jeapordized. Despite a bitter past,

* sometimes it is not so subtle...

Lithuania could not afford to adopt the attitude that the outside world somehow owed her something. Landsbergis, on the other hand, was more inclined to highlight the discrepancy between the professed values held by Western democracies and their actual policies. If there was any hypocrisy -- that is, hypocrisy beyond Lithuania's borders -- he was not reserved about pointing it out.

Prunskiene's views were apparently more pleasing to Western ears. In an interview soon after her return, I asked her about the tension between Parliament and the Council of Ministers -- and more specifically, possible tension between herself and Landsbergis. She whispered to me that it was strongly suggested to her (by an unnamed Western leader: I think it was Kohl) that "I conduct dialogue with the world." And asked whether her moves now might hurt Landsbergis' political position, she answered, "Are we working for Landsbergis or are we working for Lithuania?"

Those were fighting words, but the fight was one that only Prunskiene alluded to. Open conflict was not Landsbergis' way. A few days previously, I had asked him the same questions. His answers were much more circumspect. "There are those for whom a split between us would be very useful," he said simply.

Landsbergis also defended his public statements comparing President Bush's non-actions to those of Neville Chamberlain. "We don't have the possibility to visit Mr. Bush and come to an agreement, and then later say things the way we know they should be said," he explained, adding that it was difficult to be restrained "when tanks roll by our windows, when every day we hear from secret and trusted sources that tonight the Parliament will be occupied, or that we will all be arrested, and that another shadow government has already been prepared."

Landsbergis was clearly defensive, but it is perhaps unrealistic, even unfair, to expect him to react otherwise. The very insecurity of his position was underscored the day we spoke on this issue. It was Friday, May 18. Prime Minister Prunskiene, on the heels of her Gorbachev meeting, was conferring with US Secretary of State James Baker and diplomats from a half dozen other foreign embassies in Moscow that same day. With all the talking going on in Moscow, it might have seemed that things were moving in a positive direction towards a political solution to the crisis. Yet the situation in Vilnius was just a touch away from explosive.

Outside Landsbergis' office on the third floor of the Parliament, several thousand people had gathered in two separate, opposing demonstrations. One, in front of the Mažvydas State Library next door to the Parliament, was organized by pro-Soviet groups in Lithuania. The other, around Parliament itself, was organized by pro-Lithuanian, and in particular, pro-Landsbergis, supporters.

At the pro-Soviet demonstration, there were armed and uniformed Soviet soldiers. Speaker after speaker condemned the current Lithuanian government as having brought the republic to the brink of ruin, accused it of being adventurist, irresponsible, and called for it to be replaced by one loyal to the Soviet Union. Earlier in the day, at around noon, glancing out the Parliament's windows facing the Neris River, the staff could see Soviet helicopters scattering leaflets -- in the distance, the leaflets looked like silver flakes fluttering against a steel blue sky -- urging people to denounce the current Lithuanian leadership and attend the afternoon demonstration.

There had been pro-Soviet demonstrations in Vilnius before. But none were as unnerving; this one occurred just days after similar pro-Soviet groups had tried to storm and occupy the Latvian and Estonian Parliaments.

Just how insecure the Lithuanians were became apparent the evening before, when during a special television address, Landsbergis had asked that people -- especially able-bodied men -- gather to form a protective human ring around the Lithuanian Parliament. As we spoke in his office late the following afternoon, both groups now stood confronting each other. Echoes of Lithuanian folk songs almost drowned out the voices of the pro-Soviet demonstrators across the square. At certain points barely ten yards of empty concrete space separated the two groups. All the elements were there for a conflagration -- all that was needed was a spark. Luckily, it was never lit.

Our interview was interrupted several times, once when Landsbergis left to address the pro-Lithuanian crowd from a third floor window, another time when he took a call from Estonian Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar, a third time when a few parliamentarians needed to confer urgently for a few minutes. Despite the circumstances, an attempt was being made to conduct business as usual. As I surveyed Landsbergis' office -- an upright piano tucked away in a far corner, a carved wooden statue of a sorrowful Christ-figure on an end table, and the long rectangular conference table in addition to his own desk cluttered with piles of papers -- it seemed an oasis of calm compared to the storm outside. And as the pro-Soviet demonstrators outside were calling for the overthrow of the current Lithuanian leadership, in even, measured tones, Landsbergis continued his thoughts on the same question.

"Probably (a puppet government) has already been organized, but it simply has not gotten the command yet," he said. "The paratroopers are also ready, but they too, have not gotten the command. That "day x" hasn't yet arrived."

"So I don't know," he concluded, alluding once more to the Bush-Chamberlain statement, "whether we have a great deal of choice not to say what we clearly think, using our only weapon in fighting for public opinion -- even if at first it shocks or annoys."

And in the understatement of the day, he added as an afterthought, "Naturally these are not the diplomatic rules that a normal country plays by. But we aren't in a normal situation."

It was in this atmosphere that the debate about taking the next steps -- making actual concessions to the Kremlin -- began in earnest the following day, in another special session of Parliament. But if Parliament had been subdued before, by now there were no holds barred. Emotions, on all sides of the issue, ran high. One deputy, lawyer Vidmantas Žiemelis, even called for an open vote on any proposed resolution "so that the nation could see who its enemies were."

Underlying the entire controversy was how the parliamentarians themselves interpreted the central document reestablishing Lithuania's statehood. Was its value only as great as it could serve Lithuania's political ends, or was it something sacred, untouchable?

There was a sharp clash of opinions. On one side, there were those, like economist Eduardas Vilkas, who argued that if the March 11 act was not negotiable, then one of the few opportunities to make real progress -- and avoid almost inescapable catastrophe -- might be lost. Vilkas, clearly in a minority, himself had no qualms. "If it would help achieve real independence, I could tear this act up and write another later," he told reporters. Addressing the plenary session, he urged his colleagues to accept almost whatever Gorbachev required from Lithuania to begin negotiations, even if this meant returning to her status before March 11. His reasoning was that if Lithuania was to return to her previous status, the Soviet Union would be forced to do the same, first by lifting the blockade and then removing all the additional military personnel brought into the country since then. A commanding presence, with a manner of a gruff old wolf (his name translates as such in Lithuanian) the lanky, silver-haired Vilkas caustically admonished his fellow parliamentarians that "Maybe we have learned that we bit off more than we could chew, and nearly choked."

At the other end of the spectrum were parliamentarians who maintained that if the March 11 act was up for barter in political maneuvering with Moscow, it would then become meaningless. Parliamentarian Zita Šličytė, a lawyer from the port city of Klaipėda, represented this point of view.

"I will admit that I am shocked by this discussion" she said. "All talk about the halting, freezing or revoking of acts passed on March 11 is not really talk about halting or freezing some certain documents, but is (essentially) rejecting statehood...The Kremlin, weaving various cunning schemes, applying military and economic force, is trying to make us kill our own baby with our own hands."

She was joined by others who based their views on moral arguments. "We cannot suspend the declaration of independence,"

arqued deputy Vladimir Jarmolenka, "because it would be a betrayal of our voters, and it would mean the confirmation of everything that has been done in the past 50 years."

And there was also a leqal limbo to consider. "Whose laws would govern if we suspend March 11?" asked deputy Jonas Tamulis, who said it was unacceptable that the juridical vaccuum should be filled by the Soviet Constitution.

The debate dragged on for three working days in the Parliament's plenary session. Not surprizingly, the resolution went through several drafts before the jumpy deputies finally adopted it, by a vote of 74 to 15, with 10 abstentions. It passed on May 23, exactlv one week after their first declaration. It offered limited concessions to the Kremlin, statinq that for the duration of negotiations with the Soviet Union, the Lithuanian qovernment was prepared to suspend certain laws -- to be determined by both parties -- passed after March 11. But the declaration of independence itself remained untouched.

Such was the first formal move taken by the Lithuanian Parliament in stepping backwards. But it was still not enough to satisy Gorbachev. When he met with four Lithuanian officials for almost 45 minutes the following day, May 24, Gorbachev insisted that the declaration of independence itself be halted. He reminded the Lithuanians that this was already a considerable compromise for his earlier position requiring them to revoke the act altoqether. Were they to comply, Gorbachev told them, he was prepared to lift the economic blockade, begin negotiations and find a way for Lithuania to leave the Soviet Union in about two years. (Here Gorbachev implied that the unwieldy law on secession passed at the Extraordinary Third Session of the Congress of People's Deputies in mid-March miqht be b passed.) However, if they did not comply, Gorbachev alsc warned that he was prepared to take a step in another direction, and impose direct presidential rule in Lithuania.

"I had no reason to doubt him," said Forestry Minister Vaidotas Antanaitis later, one of the four Lithuanians in the meeting. "In late March, I remember he said he would impose sanctions, and a blockade, and he did."

Antanaitis did doubt, however, whether Gorbachev's sudden availability to the Lithuanians -- twice in the space of a week -- was not simply a pre-summit maneuver. Still, he came away with the impression that despite the threats, Gorbachev had essentially come to terms with Lithuania leaving the Soviet Union. Antanaitis' worry now was that "it will be more difficult in Vilnius than in Moscow" to decide what, if anything, to do next.

His worry was not unfounded. The Lithuanian leadership's initial reaction was at best reserved. "They are afraid of being tricked," he said, adding that "when there is no trust" there is little room for progress.

READY, SET....JUMP?

When Parliament once more took up the debate, now coined a moratorium, in late June, the political scene had changed somewhat, domestically as well as internationally. Domestically, political forces in Parliament had further evolved, coalescing into various new groups. In mid-June, a new right-wing political party, calling itself the Party of March 11, was formed by Sajudis deputy Virgilijus Cepaitis. A few days later, almost as a balance, some fifteen to twenty other Sajudis parliamentarians formed a centrist fraction, which was more inclined to support pragmatic rather than idealistic policies. The two dominant blocs that existed in Parliament until then -- the LCP and Sajudis -- were slowly fragmenting.

All this helped to make the debate about a moratorium less a partisan question. Yet the most significant changes did not occur within Lithuania, but outside her borders. On balance, the country was in a more favorable position than in the previous month. Although during the Soviet-American summit meeting in early June, President Bush had not tied Soviet behavior in Lithuania to favorable trade agreements offered to Gorbachev, help for the Lithuanians came from an entirely different source -- Boris Yeltsin. His election as president of the Russian Republic on May 29 provided a counterweight to Gorbachev that the Lithuanians were quick to exploit. While Gorbachev was still in the United States, Landsbergis, on a return trip from Czechoslovakia, had already met with Yeltsin, and began talks on the form future relations between the two republics could take.

Things also took a hopeful turn in mid-June, when for the first time in three months, Gorbachev agreed to separately meet with Landsbergis -- whom he personally dislikes -- together with Latvia's Gorbunovs and Estonia's Ruutel after a Soviet Council of Federation meeting. The council had been set up to discuss a new treaty to regulate the relationships between the fifteen republics and the Soviet Union. It was clear that all three Baltic republics were more interested in discussing ways or leaving rather than redefining their status within the Union. In a major concession, Gorbachev now no longer insisted that Lithuania suspend her declaration of independence. All these developments also added weight to those political players in Lithuania who all along had maintained that Lithuania needed to look East rather than West for support.

Nevertheless, there promised to be as much foot-dragging in the Lithuanian Parliament on a moratorium as there had been for "freezing" and "suspending". But flurried meetings between Gorbachev, Prunskiene and Landsbergis during the last week of June had given everything added momentum. The 28th Soviet Communist Party Congress was scheduled to begin on July 2, only days away. It became clear that Gorbachev wanted to resolve the three and a half month crisis between Moscow and Vilnius before it convened.

With hasty personal meetings and even hastier telephone calls, he made himself more available to the Lithuanian leadership than ever before.

And he changed his mind a lot. First, in a reversal from his position two weeks earlier, on Tuesday, June 26, he told Landsbergis in Moscow that Lithuania still must return to her March 10 status in order for there to be any negotiations. Less than 2 hours later -- with Landsbergis airborne back to Vilnius Gorbachev telephoned Prunskiene and said, no, no, he hadn't meant that at all. These contradictory messages were both reported to Parliament that same afternoon. The following day, Prunskiene and Landsbergis together flew to Moscow to clear up the confusion.

This time there was no mistake. In a major shift in position, Gorbachev no longer insisted that Lithuania return to its March 10 status, or suspend the declaration. Clearly, the time had come to do something. And like it or not, it was now up to the Lithuanians to do it.

Landsbergis still didn't like it at all, and he helped keep suspense high until almost the last minute. It was only during the plenary session at midday Friday, June 29, that he finally announced his own position. "To tell the truth," he admitted, "my heart is also not inclined towards the concession required by the stronger side. But after trips to Moscow, I have prepared one more draft proposal, for which I myself would agree to vote." Thus Landsbergis finally spoke. (Ironically, during the last two weeks of June, draft moratorium proposals begat and multiplied at a dizzying speed -- a somewhat surprizing phenomenon given the unpopularity of the whole issue. From the time Prunskiene submitted her terse version on June 16 to the time the final one, based largely on Landsbergis' draft, was hastily drawn up in late afternoon on Friday, June 29, well over a dozen different variations had been submitted by parliamentary commissions, individual deputies and Sajudis. Even Gorbachev saw some eight versions, presented to him by Landsbergis during their meeting on Tuesday, June 26.)

But what did Landsbergis himself mean by a moratorium? His understanding, he told Parliament, was that "according to international law, it was an agreement to delay or refrain from some sort of actions in a specified area or during a specified limit of time. A moratorium is commonly associated with the rise of special circumstances. It can be established while conducting negotiations for an international agreement on a special question." It did not, however, mean invalidating the declaration of independence.

Still, Landsbergis admitted, "I know that the concept of a moratorium is disquieting to Lithuanian ears." But such was the term Mikhail Gorbachev had agreed to accept, and Landsbergis hoped to convince Parliament that it would be enough to later "write in a broader explanation about which actions a moratorium would

affect". And he tried to calm Lithuanian fears by adding that they could afford to use the term moratorium as a gesture to make the Kremlin happy "even if that rings worse in our (own) ears."

"I would ask our own people," he said, "not to wince at the naked word and not to attack it like a red flag (no pun intended on Landsbergis' part), but to always read everything that is written."

For attack they did, both in and outside the Parliament. Outside on Friday, June 29, between 30-40 people stood in row, facing the main entrance and holding posters whose message was unmistakable. "A moratorium is idiocy and betrayal" read one. "The Kremlin will trick you" warned another. "Freedom is in danger" proclaimed a third. "For V. Landsbergis, Against K. Prunskiene and her moratorium" announced a fourth. (This was before Landsbergis came out in support of it). "Are you worthy of freedom?" asked a fifth. The vigil was maintained throughout the day, as the protesters, mostly middle-aged men and women, sometimes joined together in singing patriotic songs, sometimes broke up into discussion circles.

Such protests were a daily feature for much of the past month. Most were organized by Antanas Terleckas, the leader of the radical Lithuanian Liberty League (LLL), an organization whose political philosophy was categorical. The Soviet Union was an occupying enemy force with which one could not, should not negotiate. The LLL's tactics are generally limited to demonstrations and meetings -- rather than behind-the-scenes maneuvering, politicking, or deal-cutting. The LLL deliberately limited itself from the full spectrum of political activity, refusing, for example, to participate in the elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet in February. It maintained that this was activity in collusion with a collaborationist government and criticized Sajudis for doing so. After March 11, however, Terleckas -- a former dissident who had been imprisoned by the Soviets for many years -- welcomed the new government, became a stauch supporter of Landsbergis, and refocused his targets closer to home. He now declared that Lithuania's "Public Enemy Number One" was not Moscow, but the independent Lithuanian Communist Party. The LCP was dangerous because it still enjoyed popular support; Terleckas accused it of using this popularity to defend its own interests rather than those of the nation. (Despite the simplistic sloganeering with its appeals to Lithuanian national sentiments, the LLL -- under Terleckas' direction -- is not an ultranationalist organization. Terleckas' targets are Soviets, Communists -- but not Russians. He forbids posters with sentiments such as "Lithuania for Lithuanians, Russia for Russians". He has written about the need for tolerance and understanding between the various nationalities with great sensitivity and sympathy, and has criticzed Lithuanians for their often scornful attitudes towards Russians. This subtle sensibility, however, does not extend to his current role in domestic Lithuanian politics.)

A tall, heavy set man with a ruddy complexion and a thick shock of wavy silver hair, Terleckas was much on the political scene during June, if not organizing protests in front of the Council of Ministers building, then appearing on the evening news program with his latest charge about the craftiness of the LCP. For someone who rejected participating in the established political process on ideological grounds, Terleckas has become almost a daily fixture in Parliament, often observing the plenary session. Friday, June 29 found him there as well, disappointed that Landsbergis finally decided in favor of a moratorium. "I am not against Vytautas Landsbergis," he said, adding somewhat unenthusiastically that he accepts that Landsbergis "needs to maneuver."

Terleckas was not the only one who was unenthusiastic. Landsbergis' decision was a major disappointment for radically minded deputies within Parliament, the most vociferous of Prunskiene's opponents. Most of these clustered around the deputies from Kaunas, Lithuania's second largest city. (This Parliamentary grouping has proved to be a very vocal force. Only 104 kilometers west of Vilnius, Kaunas is traditionally the more Lithuanian city, with at least 90 % of her residents ethnically Lithuanian, as opposed to only 50% in Vilnius. The temporary capital of Lithuania during the inter-war years (when Poland had occupied Vilnius) Kaunas was always more patriotic, more nationalistic. In addition, Kaunas suffers from a typical second city syndrome. The proud -- and somewhat resentful-- citizens of Kaunas often accuse Vilnius of being a nest of wishy-washy liberals who dominate the national scene in culture and politics.)

Although not an official fraction, the Kaunas deputies are an extraordinarily powerful minority. Many head up parliamentary commissions. Landsbergis' critics often maintain that he is, in fact, their political hostage. He has certainly surrounded himself with Kaunas deputies. The parliamentary co-speaker, Aleksandras Abišalas, a one-time Komsomal activist and now hard-line nationalist radical, is from Kaunas. So is one of Landsbergis' three Parliamentary vice-presidents, Česlovas Stankevičius. Another vice president, Kazimieras Motieka, although not from Kaunas, is a kindred spirit. (A tall lanky man who demonstrably turned in his Communist Party card a year and a half ago, Motieka exhibits the classic behavior of the converted. Although never a typical Communist functionary, he has nevertheless turned into a typical hard-line anti-Communist activist.)

None of these deputies were pleased by the way things were going during the last week of June. When discussions on the moratorium began on Thursday afternoon, June 28, it was almost a repeat of the debates held a month earlier.

"Do not touch this holy writ," warned Algirdas Patackas, a 47 year old part-time professor of philosophy (also from Kaunas). Patackas then painted a dire scene of what might happen -- admitting that this could perhaps be interpreted as political blackmail -- if the holy writ actually were touched. He quoted a

telegram, claiming that several deputies had received identical ones, which threatened that should a moratorium be passed, "live torches would burn" in protest. (This could not be taken as simply an idle threat. This past spring, two Lithuanians already immolated themselves, ostensibly in protest of the Soviet blockade. Both died.)

In an interview later on Thursday, Patackas said he "felt a duty to help him (Landsbergis)" but also added that "I have faith that he will not leave that sacramental circle that we call March 11." Above all, Patackas said, the Lithuanians should not, could not, give in to fear. "In all political documents it should be reflected that we are prepared to go to the end."*

When Landsbergis finally came out in support of a moratorium the following day, Patackas' support evaporated. Not surprizingly, along with most of the other deputies from Kaunas, he voted against the moratorium.

After Landsbergis' speech on Friday noon, the majority of deputies who had wavered now had their minds made up. (Or, more to the point, had Landsbergis make them up for them.) Yet with the agenda packed with at least ten more parliamentarians scheduled to present their views, it looked as if the issue would simply bog down in parliamentary procedures, and no vote would be taken at all. So shortly before 4 p.m., the deputies voted on whether to vote on any proposal that day. 69, a majority, were in favor of doing so. Shortly thereafter, together with Prime Minister Prunskiene and two other deputies, Landsbergis left the session to put together the final draft.

For the following hour and a half, everyone waited. To fill in the time, various government ministers reported to Parliament on their specific areas of responsibility. Finance Minister Sikorskis answered questions about tax exemptions granted to various institutions. He was grilled as to why the daily newspaper, Respublika, a tabloid which had shocked the nation by printing girlie pictures on a number of occasions, was granted the same tax breaks as the Catholic volunteer agency, Caritas. A newly appointed official at the Ministry of Education and Culture was asked why 70 civil servants there were given their pink slips a few weeks ago, with no prior warning. And Deputy Prime Minister Brazauskas reported on aspects of the economic blockade.

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* Patackas provided me with the Quote of the Day. He admitted that he often felt out of his element in Parliament, "almost in prison." I think he is right. "I am not against the Soviet Union," he said at one point. "We do not want them to be losers. We want that there would only be winners on both sides. How to realize this politically --this I don't know. But then again -- that's not my job."

Then, after a recess -- when a rumor quickly spread that the Kaunas deputies would walk out in protest, thereby breaking the required 2/3 quorum and inevitably delaying the vote -- the plenary session resumed. It was after 6:00 p.m. Their ranks undepleted, the Kaunas deputies all returned to their seats. The final draft was ready. But the fight was not yet over.

Deputy Vidmantas Žiemelis began what was to be the final battle. Should not the editorial commission include its definition of a moratorium in the final proposal?, he asked, adding that he himself could think of at least four different interpretations.

Landsbergis answered that "one of those concepts is included here in the text -- such as the halting of actions". (Landsbergis meant actions which would normally be taken as a logical consequence of the declaration of independence).

But Žiemelis did not give up. "But which actions? Maybe it should be noted that these would be new actions?"

Landsbergis finally lost his patience. "Dear deputy," he said evenly,"I would very much like to explain this to you in private."

There was scattered applause, knowing looks, and even the scolded deputy himself smiled as he resumed his seat. But the delaying tactic was soon taken up by others. Deputy Zigmas Vaišvila said that he also didn't know what the moratorium really meant, because everything was worded in abstract phrases. Once the negotiations begin, he was afraid that "we will paralyze everything because the Constitution will be shattered and during this time period we will find ourselves in such a situation that we will not be able to work at all."

By now exasperated, Landsbergis whispered to co-speaker Abišalas next to him, "What are we doing here?" and then answered aloud, "This thing is perfectly clear to me and clear to many, and again, I would not wish to explain this to one deputy not in private."

But the tempo had been set. A third deputy joined in that he too, wanted to hear this private explanation. And a fourth said that if so many deputies still had so many doubts, these doubts must be respected, as the issue was serious.

Landsbergis capitulated, but not before once more emphasizing -- for the daft of brain -- that the issue was not one of legal niceties and formalities. "This document is essentially political," he said. "It has a political purpose, and either will or will not play a political role." And if another recess was needed for further consultations, so that a vote could be taken the same day, he was willing to go along with it. But he added that should no vote happen, this too would be a "political step, which I would not want to happen here. In that case, it would be better --

although in my opinion, still not very good -- to postpone voting until the beginning of next week."

Can we decide, he finally asked, "for how long we will agree to (keep) doubting?"

Landsbergis got an answer -- 35 minutes. Another recess was declared. Some 30 deputies then met in Landsbergis' office to hear his private explanation. That, it seemed, was all that was needed. When the deputies re-convened in plenary session at 7:15 p.m., there were no further ambiguities. And no more delays.

Co-speaker Abišalas read the draft proposal.

> "The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing and continuing to express the sovereign powers of the Nation and State in re-establishing the independent Lithuanian State and seeking the full implementation of these powers, and therefore seeking bilateral negotiations between the Republic of Lithuania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, does declare from the start of such negotiations, a 100-day moratorium on the Act of 11 March 1990, on the Restoration of the Independent Lithuanian State, that is the suspension of legal actions flowing from this Act.
>
> "The start and aims of negotiations between the Republic of Lithuania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are to be expressed in a special protocol accepted by authorized delegations from both countries.
>
> "This moratorium may be extended or terminated by a decision of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. The moratorium automatically becomes invalid upon the breaking off of negotiations.
>
> "Should certain circumstances or events not allow the First Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania to continue its normal State governing functions, the moratorium will, at that moment, cease to be valid."

The deputies voted by raising their laminated green ID cards. Their response was far from automatic. Some, such as Kazys Saja, wavered almost until the last seconds. (Saja, for example, had been staunchly against any concessions all along. Popular and respected as a playwright, as a politician Saja experienced his first taste of unpopularity this past spring. When, during one session of Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister Brazauskas announced that fuel reserves were running critically low at a certain electricity generating plant, Saja responded that the nation need not despair. It had vast reserves of spiritual energy, energy which had propelled Lithuania to achieve goals it hadn't even dared to dream about just a short while before. But that did not go down too well with the voters. The next time he visited his electoral district, Saja got an earful. Then plug in your spiritual energy and make electricity, some of his irate constituents told him.) Recently,

Saja had begun to soften his hard-line stance. Now he tapped his fingers nervously before raising his card. But raise it he did, finally deciding in favor of the moratorium. His face was grim.

The proposal passed at about 7.25 p.m., by an easy, if not overwhelming majority. Sixty-nine deputies voted for it, 35 against, 2 abstained. Less than an hour later, the main Soviet news program, Vremya, announced it over its 8 p.m. (local Lithuanian time) news broadcast. Unlike most reports about Lithuania during the past spring, this one was even-handed, even favorable. It seemed as if someone in Moscow breathed a huge sigh of relief.

There were, of course, many in Lithuania who also felt relief. But it was not the relief born of victory. Later that evening in Parliament, a young blond deputy walked by, his eyes red. He was one of those who had not understood the concept of a moratorium -- either legally, or politically or -- most importantly -- emotionally. He was not alone.

But what about those who had understood? Deputy Prime Minister Romualdas Ozolas, a consistent advocate of the moratorium, was asked that evening if he was happy. No, he answered two days later, over a traditional Sunday television broadcast. "It did not make me happy. But it had to be done."

CHRONOLOGY: May 13 - July 1, 1990

May 12 Vytautas Landsbergis, Anatolijs Gorbunovs and Arnold Ruutel revive the pre-war policy-coordinating organization, the Baltic Council. They send letter to Gorbachev calling for independence negotiations to be conducted jointly with all three republics

May 13 Prime Minister Prunskiene returns to Lithuania from visits to Canada, the United States, Great Britain, France and West Germany

Due to paper shortage resulting from the economic blockade, all daily newspapers are reduced to tabloid size; weekly newspapers cut number of pages in half

May 14 In her first press conference in Lithuania after her trip, Prime Minister Prunskiene calls for a change in Parliament's expectations of support from Western countries

Deputy Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas visits the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

May 14 The Lithuanian Department of Statistics reports that from the beginning of the blockade, the republic has not earned about 36,6 million roubles. 255,145 man days have not been worked.

May 15 Kazimiera Prunskiene addresses Parliament, calls on it to take the first step, even if this means compromise, towards negotiations with the Soviet Union

At about 11.00 A.M., several thousand anti-Latvian independence demonstrators attempt to storm the Latvian Parliament, but are repelled by the local militia. They protest the Latvian declaration of independence. There are some injuries reported. Simultaneously, strikes occur in five different factories in Riga and the port city of Ventspils. It is suspected that the demonstrations were organized by the pro-Soviet Interfront organization

May 16 In a closed plenary session, the Lithuanian Parliament passes a declaration stating that it is prepared to consider suspending some of the decisions made after the declaration of independence

At about 4. p.m., at an anti-Popular Front mass meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, sponsored by the pro-Soviet group Interfront, 6000 demonstrators call for the resignation of the Estonian government. The demonstrators later try to occupy the Estonian Parliament

May 17 In late afternoon Prime Minister Prunskiene hand delivers the declaration to Moscow; meets with Mikhail Gorbachev and Nicolai Ryzhkov alone the same evening for almost two hours. This marks the first meeting between a Lithuanian government leader and the Soviet leadership since the March 11 declaration of independence.

At 8:05 p.m., the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, which supplies most of Lithuania's electricity closes down due to a safety signal. Because of the blockade, it would have been scheduled to close down anyway on May 20. With Ignalina out of commission, Lithuania's energy situation is nearing crisis point.

Over the evening news program, President Landsbergis requests that people gather at the Parliament the following day to prevent a possible takeover by pro-Soviet demonstrators

May 18 Together with Vice Presidents Stankevičius and Bronius Kuzmickas, Prime Minister Prunskiene meets with US Secretary of State James Baker for one hour, and also visits the embassies of Norway, Great Britain, USA, Italy, Sweden, France and Canada

May 18 Several thousand pro-Soviet demonstrators gather in Vilnius in front of the Mažvydas State Library, next to the Lithuanian Parliament. Counter-demonstrators gather around the Parliament

The first national Cultural Congress in 55 years begins in Vilnius; 300 guests invited from overseas are absent due to the blockade on visas.

May 19 A special session of Parliament convenes at 12:00 noon, debate begins on the possible halting or freezing of acts following the March 11 declaration of independence

Sculptor Rimantas Daugintis, who immolated himself while on a trip to Hungary (apparently in protest of Soviet activities in Lithuania) dies from his injuries in a hospital in the Hungarian border town of Zahone.

May 23 Lithuanian Parliament passes a resolution saying that with the start of negotiations with the Soviet Union, it is prepared to freeze certain laws -- to be determined by both Lithuania and the Soviet Union -- flowing out of the March 11 declaration of independence, but not the act of independence itself.

The Ignalina Plant starts up again

May 24 In a meeting with four Lithuanian officials -- Lithuania's permanent representative in Moscow, Egidijus Bičkauskas, Forestry Ministry Vaidotas Antanaitis, Deputies Nicolai Medvedev and Romas Gudaitis -- Gorbachev rejects the Lithuanian resolution, saying that it does not go far enough

May 26-27 Prime Minister Prunskiene travels to West Berlin participates in conference for Catholic countries, meets with West German President Richard von Weizsaecker and Chancellor Kohl

May 29 Boris Yeltsin is elected president of the Russian Soviet Republic

May 30 On the personal invitation of President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Vytautas Landsbergis travels to Prague; meets with Havel, other officials, discusses possible cultural, economic and political ties

Lithuania's Department of Statistics reports that as of May 30, due to the lack of fuel, more than a third of commerce, construction and transportation enterprises are at a standstill; 21,900 people are unemployed and a further 15,400 are on early vacation.

May 31 — 300 out of 380 deputies of the Soviet Moldavian Republic vote to recognize the independence of the Lithuanian Republic

June 1 — Vytautas Landsbergis, returning from Czechoslovakia, meets with Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. Landsbergis later says of the meeting,"It is the beginning of future contacts with the Russian Federation, which seeks direct ties, on a contractual basis, with the Lithuanian Republic."

May 31-June 3 — Bush-Gorbachev summit meeting in the United States; Bush offers favorable trade agreement to Gorbachev without linking it to lifting the economic blockade in Lithaunia. Most-favored nation status for USSR now is linked only to the Soviet emigration law

June 11-13 — Prime Minister Prunskiene and Deputy Prime Ministter Brazauskas meet with Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov in Moscow for two days of talks, officially on the economic blockade (unofficially about possible negotiations; the previous Friday, June 8, in a telephone conversation with Prunskiene, Ryzhkov said the Soviet Union no longer insisted that the March 11 independence declaration be suspended for talks to begin)

June 12 — Presidents Landsbergis, Gorbunovs and Ruutel meet privately with Gorbachev in Moscow after a Soviet Council of Federation meeting to discuss possible mechanisms for leaving the Soviet Union. Gorbachev offers the alternative of drawing up new treaties between all the republics and the central government. It is the first time in three months that Gorbachev meets with Landsbergis

June 15 — Lithuania commemorates the 49th anniversary of the first deportations by the Soviet Union of Lithuanian citizens to Siberia. It is called the Day of Mourning and Hope

June 16 — In the name of the Council of Ministers, Prime Minister Prunskiene sends a draft proposal on a moratorium to the Lithuanian Parliament

June 17 — Prime Minister Prunskiene and Deputy Prime Minister Ozolas leave on a five-day trip to Greece

June 22 — Prime Minister Prunskiene stops off for a short stay in Poland on return to Lithuania from Greece. She meets with Polish Prime Minister Mazowiecki. Describing Polish views as "almost too moderate", Prunskiene later reports that Polish recognition of Lithuania depends entirely on Soviet recognition of Lithuania

June 26 Landsbergis, together with Vice President Stankevičius and Lithuania's permanent representative in Moscow, Egidijus Bičkauskas, meets with Gorbachev, and President of the Supreme Soviet Lukianov. In a reversal from his position two weeks previously, Gorbachev says that Lithuania still must return to her status on March 10 in order for negotiations to begin

June 26 At 12.30 p.m., two hours after Landsbergis leaves meeting, Gorbachev telephones Prime Minister Prunskiene and says that Lithuania does NOT have to return to status of March 10 in order for negotiations to begin.
Late that afternoon, both Landsbergis and Prunskiene report the contradictory messages to the Lithuanian Parliament

June 27 Together with three deputies from the Lithuanian Parliament, Landsbergis and Prunskiene meet with Gorbachev outside Moscow, in a private villa, where the Soviet leader explains his final position: Lithuania need not return to her March 10 status.

June 29 At 17.25, by a vote of 69 for, 35 against, and 2 abstentions, the Lithuanian Parliament passes a declaration accepting a moratorium on the March 11 declaration of independence during the period of negotiations with the Soviet Union

That same evening, President Landsbergis and Prime Minister Prunskiene leave for Tallinn for Baltic Council meeting; Prime Minister Prunskiene later leaves for Finland for a meeting of northern European countries

June 30 Prime Minister Prunskiene's office receives a telephone call from the the Soviet Union's deputy minister for fuel and energy Chiurilov that the first fuel can flow to Mazeikiai oil refinery plant at 15.00. The plant accepts the fuel at 17.35. and begins operations the following day. It is estimated that it will be two weeks before the first refined petrol will be produced. Since the beginning of the blockade, 300 specialists (mostly non-Lithuanians) have left Mazeikiai.

- End of Report -

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