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HOW AMERICA CAN HELP BALTIC INDEPENDENCE

The Baltic peoples' struggle for independence is entering its decisive phase. For now, the spotlight is on Lithuania, where Mikhail Gorbachev's show of force is an attempt to frighten into submission that country's democratically elected government. In the wings, ready to move to stage center, are the independence movements of Estonia and Latvia.

The crisis in Lithuania is forcing Washington to make some hard decisions about the Baltic states. For a half-century, of course, the United States has supported the restoration of their independence. This support was largely rhetorical and cost little; it had virtually no effect. Now, the U.S. can make good on its decades of promises and declarations. This the U.S. must do – in a firm and direct, but measured way.

At this critical moment in the history of the Baltic republics, George Bush should extend official recognition to the new democratic government in Lithuania and tell Gorbachev that Moscow will pay a heavy price if it uses force against Lithuania and the other two Baltic states.

Illegally Annexed. The case for America supporting Baltic independence is overwhelming: America never has accepted Moscow's rule over the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were independent and sovereign states after their independence was recognized by the Soviet Union in 1920 and by the international community. But as the result of a secret treaty between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in August 1939 – the infamous "Hitler-Stalin Pact" – the Baltic states were occupied and annexed by Moscow in 1940. This annexation was not recognized by the U.S., and the Hitler-Stalin Pact at last was declared illegal by the Soviet Parliament on December 28, 1989.

American policies to help the Baltic republics must not be an *ad hoc* response to the dramatic, exhilarating, and frightening events there. Instead, the policies must rest on a foundation of sound principles applying beyond Es-

tonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to all the Soviet nationalities and their desires for independence and self-determination. These are:

Principle #1: The U.S. supports Baltic independence.

Principle #2: The U.S. very strongly favors the peaceful achievement of independence.

Principle #3: The U.S. will impose an appropriate penalty on Moscow if it prevents, by intimidation or force, peaceful independence of the Baltic republics.

Principle #4: The U.S. will understand sympathetically if the Baltic states must use force to counter Moscow's intimidation and force, but the U.S. will not be able to provide help for such Baltic use of force other than American verbal expressions of solidarity and sympathy.

Principle #5: The U.S. will reward Moscow appropriately for allowing the Baltic republics to become independent peacefully and similarly will reward Moscow for allowing other Soviet nationalities to achieve independence or self-determination peacefully.

Principle #6: The U.S. seeks no unilateral gain in the matter of Baltic independence nor does it seek to exploit the matter to harm the Soviet Union.

Translating these principles into policy, the Bush Administration should:

◆ ◆ **Warn Moscow not to use force against the Baltic states, making clear that a crackdown will seriously impair U.S.-Soviet relations.** Gorbachev hopes to revive the Soviet economy with help from the West. Moscow must realize that using force against the Baltics will torpedo such help.

◆ ◆ **Grant official recognition to the new democratic Baltic governments once they establish their sovereignty and request U.S. recognition.** The U.S. should appoint ambassadors to each republic and upgrade the existing Baltic diplomatic missions in the U.S. from legations to full-fledged embassies.

◆ ◆ **Ask Congress to exchange parliamentary groups with each Baltic republic.** These exchanges could be part of a series of linkages between Congress and the Baltics' new parliaments, which would demonstrate American support for the new democracies, help end their psychological isolation from the West, and assist their reestablishment of effective legislative powers. Congress should also invite Lithuania's President Vyautas Landsbergis to address a joint session.

◆ ◆ **Include these countries in U.S. foreign aid packages to Eastern Europe.** The Baltic states are part of Eastern Europe, and the U.S. should treat them as such. Even small amounts of U.S. assistance would help them enormously.

◆ ◆ **Make Soviet military occupation of the Baltic states a conventional arms control issue.** The U.S. and its NATO allies must make clear to Moscow that an agreement on conventional force reductions will not confer any right on the Soviet Union to station its forces in the Baltic states and also

declare that any future negotiations will address the issue of the Soviet military occupation of these countries.

◆ ◆ **Encourage international organizations, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and such European organizations as the Council of Europe, to admit the Baltic states as full members.** The Baltic states are recognized as sovereign countries by much of the international community and deserve to be members of the United Nations just as they were of the League of Nations. The IMF and its sister organization the World Bank provide credits to member governments. The GATT is a broad-based grouping of countries dedicated to removing trade barriers. Membership in each will assist the Baltic states in quickly joining the international economy.

◆ ◆ **Insist that this fall's session of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) discuss Baltic independence.** The forthcoming CSCE meeting is being held at Soviet request to review the broad range of political and security issues in Europe. It is the best forum at which to discuss the issue of Baltic independence as it will be attended by every European country except Albania, as well as the U.S. and Canada. The Baltic states should participate in this meeting on an equal basis with the other European states.

◆ ◆ **Press America's Western allies to take similar actions to support the Baltic states.**

The Baltic independence movements offer the U.S. the opportunity to assist the orderly dissolution of the Soviet colonial empire. With their emphasis on a peaceful and negotiated path to independence, the Baltic states offer Moscow a chance to address its imperial crisis before it explodes. Their success could be a model for resolving peacefully other phases of what could be the enormously dangerous problem of Soviet decolonization. U.S. support for this process would strengthen those Soviet leaders who understand that Moscow's use of force to suppress the nationalist movements almost surely would lead to disaster and prolonged conflict. Conversely, U.S. and Western inaction regarding the Baltic republics' strivings for independence would make it easier for those in the Kremlin who would use force to suppress all of the nationalities.

THE ORIGINS OF INDEPENDENCE

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have long and illustrious histories. Although Lithuania was a major power in Eastern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, ruling over territories stretching from present-day Poland to Ukraine,¹ each Baltic state has suffered repeated conquests. They became part of the

¹ Although common American usage places "the" before Ukraine, Ukrainians assert that this derives from Moscow's claim that Ukraine is a region of Russia, not a nation unto itself.

Russian Empire when Peter the Great took them from Sweden in the Great Northern War in 1718. They and the other peoples conquered by Moscow remained a part of that Empire until the disintegration of central authority in the Russian Revolutions of 1917.

Independence Recognized. During the Russian Civil War, which broke out in early 1918, several of the subject peoples of the Empire – the Baltic states, Finland, Georgia, Poland, Ukraine, and other areas in Muslim Central Asia – seized their opportunity to escape and declared their independence from Russia. By 1921, however, Ukraine and Central Asia and most other states had been reconquered by the Red Army. Poland and the Baltic republics were not. Moscow eventually renounced all claims to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and recognized their full independence in treaties signed on February 2, August 11, and July 12, 1920, respectively. The U.S. recognized all three on July 28, 1922.

After independence, these countries managed an uneasy coexistence with their giant neighbor. On August 23, 1939, however, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Hitler-Stalin Pact, which divided Eastern Europe between them. The Pact's secret protocols allotted Estonia and Latvia to Moscow; Lithuania went to Germany. The Pact was modified in 1940 to give Lithuania to the Soviet Union in exchange for some of Moscow's share of recently conquered Poland. The Soviet Union moved quickly to take control of the Baltic states. Treaties allowing Soviet forces to be stationed on their soil were forced on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on September 28, October 5, and October 10, 1939, respectively. These were soon followed by outright Soviet military occupation and an overthrow of the independent governments. Rigged elections were held producing communist-dominated parliaments, which on July 21, 1940, voted to request annexation to the Soviet Union. The Stalinist terror then descended with full force in the summer of 1940, and tens of thousands of people were imprisoned, executed, or sent to the Gulag in Siberia.

Washington responded by extending to the Baltic states its policy of refusing to recognize the forcible seizure of territory by the fascist powers. This was the origin of the "non-recognition policy" by which the U.S. continues to treat the Baltic states as independent and does not officially recognize their incorporation into the Soviet Union.

Brave Resistance. Although the countries conquered by the Nazis and Japanese were liberated at the end of World War II, the Soviet Union, as one of the victorious powers, kept the territories it had seized. These included Moldavia, western Ukraine, eastern Poland, parts of southern and eastern Finland and, of course, the Baltic states. Armed partisans in western Ukraine, the Baltics, and some other territories, bravely resisted Soviet occupation for nearly two years, but largely were crushed by 1947.

As relations between the West and the Soviet Union deteriorated, the U.S. non-recognition policy toward the Baltic states was adopted by other countries. The NATO nations, for instance, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states. Even Britain went along

with the U.S., despite London's traditional policy of recognizing the authority of whichever government exercises control over a particular territory, which in the case of the Baltic states should have been the Soviet Union. The only Western countries to recognize the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states are Finland and Sweden.

Complicated Policy. The U.S. non-recognition policy is complicated. On the one hand, Washington refuses to recognize as legal the annexation of these countries into the Soviet Union and continues to grant official status to their pre-war diplomatic legations in the U.S. On the other, Washington officially recognizes neither any exile government nor the current governments of these republics.

Each Baltic diplomatic mission in the U.S., known as legations, draws its support primarily from the exile communities in the U.S. and abroad. Stasys Lozoraitis, chargé of the Lithuanian legation, and Anatol Dinbergs, chargé of the Latvian legation, have their missions in Washington; Ernst Jaakson, chargé of the Estonian legation, is in New York City.

THE BALTIC STATES TODAY

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are small in territory and population. Estonia's population is approximately 1.6 million, of which only around one million are ethnic Estonians, with approximately 40 percent of the population now consisting of Russian-speaking immigrants who have arrived since 1940.² Almost half of Latvia's population of 2.6 million is composed of these immigrants. Only 20 percent of Lithuania's 3.7 million people are non-Lithuanian, but this minority is growing rapidly, doubling in the 1980s. Their combined territories would fit comfortably within Oregon.

The Baltic republics are the most economically advanced region in the Soviet Union; by Western standards they are backward. Their main industries are metallurgy, shipbuilding, and food processing, and are extensively integrated into the Soviet command economy.

The integration of the Baltic states into the Soviet economy has impoverished these countries. The Heritage Foundation was told by several Estonian economists in Tallinn that, whereas Estonia and Finland had comparable standards of living in 1940, Finland's now is several times higher than that of Estonia; by some measures Finland is fifteen times higher.

² "Russian-speaking" need not denote persons ethnically Russian. Many of the immigrants belong to other Soviet ethnic groups, such as Ukrainians and Armenians. Their use of Russian as a common language is due to the Soviet policy of promoting Russian among ethnically mixed populations. Few immigrants learn the local languages in the Baltic republics.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Official Name*	Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic	Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic	Republic of Lithuania
Capital	Tallinn	Riga	Vilnius
Area (sq. miles)	17,413	24,590	25,174
Population	1.6 million	2.7 million	3.7 million
Ethnic Composition	60% Estonian 40% Russian and other**	54% Latvian 33% Russian 13% other	79% Lithuanian 9% Russian 7% Polish 5% other
Religion	Estonians and Latvians are traditionally Lutheran. Lithuanians and Poles are Roman Catholic; Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians are Orthodox.		
Major Industries	Paper, shipbuilding, shale oil and gas	Shipbuilding, metallurgy, and timber	Shipbuilding, textiles, and chemicals

* On March 11, 1990, Lithuania changed its name to the Republic of Lithuania from the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. Estonia and Latvia are expected to follow in the near future.

THE RISE OF THE BALTIC INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

Despite severe persecution by Moscow, the Baltic peoples have preserved strong national identities. Increasing concern over the enormous ecological harm caused by Soviet industrial pollution and growing interest in their independent cultures sparked a rapid growth of Baltic nationalism in the 1980s. Sparking it too were the mounting numbers of Russian-speaking immigrants, sent to the Baltics by Moscow to secure its political control. Between 1940 and last year, approximately 400,000 such immigrants made their way to Estonia. The prospect of becoming minorities in their own countries created a sense of urgency among the native Baltic peoples, feeding the fires of nationalism.

Gorbachev's reforms also spurred Baltic action. He relaxed censorship and permitted non-communist organizations to operate more freely. Because they are culturally the closest to the West of the Soviet Union's nationalities, and thus more directly influenced by Western ideas, the response to these new freedoms was deepest and most immediate in the Baltic states. Much of Estonia, for example, receives Finnish television.

Umbrella Groups. With the relaxation of repression, a number of cultural and environmental organizations were formed in the Baltics. Typically they grouped themselves under Popular Front umbrellas. The most well known is

the Popular Front in Lithuania, called *Sajudis*, the Lithuanian word for "movement." The Popular Fronts were controlled at first by the Republic's Communist Parties, but gradually established their independence and became increasingly committed to political autonomy for the Baltic states. Non-communist and more overtly nationalist organizations such as the Lithuanian Freedom League and the Estonian National Independence Party played important roles in pushing the debate in these countries rapidly in that direction. These organizations openly advocated complete independence from Moscow.

1989: Prelude to Independence

As the nationalist organizations gained momentum throughout last year, the drive toward independence accelerated. Despite intimidation by the communist authorities, *Sajudis* candidates won 36 of the 39 seats for which it competed in the March 26, 1989, elections to the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies. The Lithuanian Communist Party won only four seats.

The increasing strength of *Sajudis* and other organizations like the Lithuanian Freedom League forced the communist government in Lithuania to make radical reforms. The Lithuanian constitution was amended on May 18 to state that Soviet law is valid in that republic only if ratified by the Lithuanian parliament. On that date, the parliament also passed a "Declaration of Lithuanian State Sovereignty" proclaiming that Lithuania had been annexed forcibly by the Soviet Union and had never surrendered its sovereignty.³

A commission established by the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet or parliament on August 22 to examine the Hitler-Stalin Pact and its secret protocols ruled that these had been "invalid from the moment of their signing" and, more important, that Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union therefore was illegal. A law was enacted in November that restricts Lithuanian citizenship to those who were citizens prior to the Soviet annexation, and to their descendants. Others can apply for citizenship after a ten-year residency. This was intended to discourage further immigration into Lithuania.

Gorbachev Rebuffed. Desperate to shore up its rapidly declining popularity, the Lithuanian Communist Party withdrew from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on December 20. Gorbachev and other senior Soviet leaders rushed to Lithuania to persuade the Lithuanian communists to reverse their decision. They were rebuffed and encountered in the capital of Vilnius a demonstration of 300,000 Lithuanians demanding independence.

Events in Estonia and Latvia followed similar courses. Although established only in October 1988, the Popular Front of Latvia captured three-fourths of the seats in the following March's elections for the Soviet Congress

3 "Lithuania Declares Its Sovereignty," *Report on the USSR*, Volume 1, No. 22, June 2, 1989.

of People's Deputies. Since only 50 percent of the population is ethnically Latvian, this overwhelming victory demonstrated that the independence forces embraced even great segments of the large Russian-speaking population. The Popular Front's official program was amended on October 8, 1989, declaring independence for Latvia to be its official goal.⁴

Two Estonian Parliaments. The political situation in Estonia is more complex than in Latvia or Lithuania. Two popularly elected Estonian parliaments now exist, each claiming to represent the republic. The elections this March 18 for the Estonian Supreme Soviet produced a Popular Front-dominated government committed to independence. But a wholly separate parliament, the Congress of Estonia, had been created in non-official elections this February 24; it was organized by a movement known as the Estonian Citizens' Committees.

The Citizens' Committees were established by a number of parties, the most important of which is the Estonian National Independence Party led by Tunne Kelam. Through enormous effort, the Citizens' Committees organized the February 24 elections for the Congress of Estonia, in which approximately 600,000 out of a population of one million ethnic Estonians participated. The voting was restricted to those Estonians in the republic and abroad who could prove Estonian citizenship at the time of the Soviet takeover in 1940, or who are descended from those who were citizens at that time. Those who have come to Estonia since then are considered to have settled illegally as a result of the Soviet occupation. They have been told that they will be able to apply for Estonian citizenship at a future date.

Occupation Government. The Citizens' Committees maintain that the Republic of Estonia destroyed by the Soviet takeover in 1940 continues to have a legal existence and that the Congress of Estonia now represents it. In addition, they contend that the present political system in Estonia, including the Supreme Soviet, is a creation of the Soviet occupation and is therefore illegitimate. Given the cooperation between the independence forces in both legislatures, it is possible that the new Estonian Supreme Soviet will dissolve itself and recognize the authority of the Congress of Estonia, creating a challenge to Soviet authority by dismantling all institutions of Soviet rule in the republic.

The Estonian Supreme Soviet has already taken a step in this direction, passing a resolution last November 12, declaring Estonia's forcible annexation by the Soviet Union null and void.⁵

4 "Estonia," *Report on the USSR* Volume 1, No. 52, December 29, 1989.

5 *Ibid.* In so doing, it also called into question its own legitimacy as a creation of that same takeover.

THE KREMLIN'S REACTION

The Kremlin opposes the Baltic independence movements and threatens reprisals if defiance continues. The Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee has warned that continued assertions of Baltic nationalism "could be disastrous" and could "call into question the viability of the Baltic peoples."

The Kremlin also threatens that independence could bring economic disaster. During his January trip to Lithuania, Gorbachev said repeatedly that Lithuania could not survive without access to Soviet raw materials and markets. Indeed all of Lithuania's oil and natural gas come from the Soviet Union, and its industries are tightly integrated into the Soviet economy.⁶

Coupled with Moscow's stick has been a small carrot, promising compromise short of independence. Thus the Soviet parliament on November 28 granted the Baltic states economic autonomy, transferring some economic decision-making from Moscow to the republics. Under this arrangement, Moscow is to retain control of defense and "heavy" industries (cement, steel, transportation) while the republics would take control of agriculture, consumer, and construction industries. So far, however, Moscow has exploited the legislation's ambiguities to prevent the transfer of real economic power to the Baltic states. The Heritage Foundation was told by Ojars Blumbergs, chief economic advisor to the Popular Front in Latvia, that his country has had to "fight for control over every enterprise" promised to it under the economic autonomy laws passed by Moscow.

Moscow's Roadblocks. The Soviet government, meanwhile, routinely declares the legislation of the Baltic governments unconstitutional. Example: on August 16, 1989, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies struck down the election law passed by the Estonian Supreme Soviet and ordered it to amend Estonia's constitution. Example: despite Article 72 of the Soviet constitution, which gives each republic an unrestricted right to secede from the U.S.S.R., the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies is considering a law to make secession very difficult, if not impossible. The Soviet government also claims that it should be compensated for purported investments in the Baltic economies if the republics secede; Lithuania's bill would be \$33 billion.

A greater danger to Baltic independence was created by Gorbachev's assumption of vastly enhanced presidential powers this March 13. He now can suspend the elected parliaments of the republics and declare a state of emergency and rule by decree. Thus, to the extent that the Soviet constitution is valid in the Baltic states, Gorbachev now has the legal authority to remove the governments of the Baltic republics and impose rule directly from Moscow. He used this authority last week when he ordered more Soviet troops

⁶ Ann Sheehy, "Gorbachev's Arguments Cut Little Ice with Lithuanians," *Report on the USSR*, Volume 2, No. 6, February 9, 1990.

into Lithuania, and he may use it yet to impose his direct rule over that country.

BALTIC INDEPENDENCE AND THE SOVIET IMPERIAL CRISIS

The Baltic independence movements are part of a broader crisis in the Soviet Union. Of all the problems facing Moscow, including the economic, none is more serious than the increasing demands for self-determination by its many subject nationalities. The independence movements in the Baltics are only the furthest advanced of these nationalist forces and have counterparts in Georgia, Moldavia, Ukraine, and among most of the Soviet Union's ethnic groups.

The Ukrainian nationalist organization *Rukh* did exceptionally well in the March 4 elections for the Ukrainian parliament, capturing an unexpected 30 percent of the seats. The Supreme Soviet of Georgia declared on March 9 that the forcible Soviet annexation of that country in 1921 was illegal. The Muslim republics, especially Azerbaijan, are increasingly defiant of Moscow. Moscow understands that the Baltic states' moves toward regaining their independence are only the first in a series of challenges to Soviet rule by the non-Russian nationalities.

Important Precedent. An explosive situation is developing as Moscow attempts to retain control. The temptation to use military force to restore Soviet authority, as in January's crackdown in Soviet Azerbaijan, likely will grow as the nationalities increasingly defy Moscow. Ultimately, this problem can best be solved by granting greater freedom to the nationalities. At a February 5 to 7 meeting of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee, Gorbachev discussed a possible Treaty of Union in which economic and political power would be decentralized; only sketchy reports of this have been made public.⁷ One idea would extend to all of the Soviet Union's fifteen republics the same economic autonomy that has been granted to the Baltic states. If the Soviet leadership is serious about addressing the nationalities' demands for greater self-determination through a new Treaty of Union, a peaceful and negotiated path to Baltic independence could provide Moscow with an important precedent for avoiding the looming violent showdown with its subject nationalities.

Although a Soviet military intervention temporarily might crush Baltic independence, such force surely could not be dispatched against all the U.S.S.R.'s nationalities. Explained Sergei Odarich, a leader of the Ukrainian nationalist organization *Rukh*, on March 21: "Against little Lithuania he could still find a pretext to send in troops. But against the [50 million] Ukrainian people, this is impossible."⁸

7 "Moscow Offers Republics Freedom Under New Treaty," *The Financial Times* March 21, 1990.

8 "Nationalist Party in Ukraine Vows to Push Independence," *The Washington Times*, March 22, 1990.

PROMOTING BALTIC INDEPENDENCE

While the U.S. cannot affect the process of Baltic independence directly, it can devise policies aimed at ensuring that it occurs peacefully. These policies must rest on a foundation of solid principles that include:

Principle #1: The U.S. supports Baltic independence.

Principle #2: The U.S. very strongly favors the peaceful achievement of independence.

Principle #3: The U.S. will impose an appropriate penalty on Moscow if it prevents, by intimidation or force, peaceful independence of the Baltic states.

Principle #4: The U.S. will understand sympathetically if Baltic states must use force to counter Moscow's intimidation and force, but the U.S. will not be able to provide help for such Baltic use of force other than American verbal expressions of solidarity and sympathy.

Principle #5: The U.S. will reward Moscow appropriately for allowing the Baltic republics to become independent peacefully and similarly will reward Moscow for allowing other Soviet nationalities to attain independence or self-determination peacefully.

Principle #6: The U.S. seeks no unilateral gain in the matter of Baltic independence nor does it seek to exploit the matter to harm the Soviet Union.

U.S. support for Baltic independence would strengthen the hand of those in the Kremlin who oppose using force against the nationalities. They could argue that the use of force would guarantee a loss of Western support for *perestroika* and do nothing to solve the underlying problems that are causing the problems in the first place. U.S. support for Baltic independence also would signal to Moscow and the nationalist movements that Washington supports a peaceful and cooperative approach to self-determination, assuming Moscow refrains from using force.

For the U.S. to do nothing while Baltic peoples seek independence would only make matters worse. Gorbachev surely is watching Western actions and statements closely. He surely does not want a rupture in good relations with the West because the economic revival of his country depends on Western cooperation. Counseling Gorbachev that this cooperation will be jeopardized if he represses Baltic independence movements with force should encourage his restraint. To translate the Six Principles into policy, Bush should:

◆ ◆ **Warn Moscow against the use of force against the Baltic states.**

Washington must make clear to Moscow that a Soviet crackdown in the Baltics will result in an abrupt downturn in its relations with the U.S. and the West as a whole. This warning should be communicated both publicly and privately by Bush and the Congress. The Administration has been toughening its public signals to Moscow, most notably Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney's March 25 statement that a Soviet military intervention would have "a significant negative impact" on U.S.-Soviet relations.

The U.S. should warn Moscow that the use of force against the Baltic states would result in a number of costs to the Soviet Union, especially relating to Moscow's attempts to increase economic cooperation with the West. Such a warning could give the Baltic states additional leverage against Moscow and encourage the Kremlin to settle this problem peacefully.

Among the costs that Bush should say that he will impose are:

- 1) Postponement of the promises made at the Malta Summit. These included expanding U.S.-Soviet technical cooperation, lifting U.S. restrictions on export credits and guarantees, negotiating a bilateral investment treaty and supporting Soviet observer status at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks.
- 2) A call upon the United Nations to condemn the Soviet action in the Baltics just as the U.N. condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
- 3) Suspension of U.S.-Soviet scientific exchanges.
- 4) Opposition to Soviet membership in the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other international organizations.

◆ ◆ **Formally recognize the Baltic states as independent.** For half a century, the U.S. has maintained that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were forcibly and illegally incorporated into the Soviet Union and has demanded that the Soviet Union restore their independence. It rightly refused to deal with the unelected communist governments of these countries that followed the Soviet annexation. Now that these countries are becoming free and democratic, the U.S. should not ignore their requests for recognition. The U.S. should impose three conditions for recognition: The governments in the Baltic states must be democratically elected; the governments formally must declare or reassert their independence; the governments must request U.S. recognition.

Lithuania meets all three conditions. The democratic forces under the *Sajudis* banner won over two-thirds of the seats in the February 24 elections for the Lithuanian parliament. A government headed by President Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of *Sajudis*, was established and independence was declared on March 11 by a parliamentary vote of 141 to 0. Requests for Western recognition followed immediately. Estonia and Latvia seem to be following these steps rapidly. In the two republics' March 18 parliamentary elections, the Popular Fronts in both republics won a majority of the seats. Each has established governments expected to declare formal independence shortly.

The Bush Administration has added a fourth condition for U.S. recognition: that these governments be in full and effective control of their territory. This is not unreasonable as long as it is not used as an excuse to avoid recognition. The words "effective control," however, are ambiguous and should be clearly defined.

◆ ◆ **Include these countries in the U.S. assistance package for Eastern Europe.** The SEED (Support for East European Democracy) Act of 1990, to help Poland and Hungary, will be expanded this year to all of Eastern Europe. This measure has been dubbed SEED II. Independent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania will be part of Eastern Europe and should be entitled to participate in SEED II's programs as are Eastern Europe's other countries. Among other things, this would make them eligible for loans to private entrepreneurs, give their governments access to credit, and provide them the technical assistance to clean their environment, improve their farm economy, and launch small businesses.

The Baltic states especially need assistance establishing centers for business education and managerial expertise. Their future depends on their creating a free market economy quickly; yet they have little experience with capitalism and insufficient resources to hire experts from abroad. America can help them establish business schools and take other measures to speed free market reforms. No U.S. assistance, however, should be funneled through Soviet organizations without the consent of the Baltic governments. These governments, for example, may authorize the U.S. to deal with Soviet banking, customs, and other organizations.

◆ ◆ **Ask Congress to exchange parliamentary groups with each Baltic republic.** Congress has a very important role to play in providing symbolic and material support to Lithuania especially if Bush is unable to grant recognition to Lithuania in the near future. By exchanging official delegates with the new Baltic parliaments, Congress could demonstrate highly visible American support for the new democratic governments. Such a connection would help to end the psychological isolation these countries feel and could also be used to provide the new parliaments with assistance on establishing their legislative authority. Congress should also invite President Landsbergis to address a joint session.

◆ ◆ **Make Soviet military occupation of the Baltic states a conventional arms control issue.** At the Vienna talks on an East-West treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), the U.S. and its NATO allies should declare that nothing in the agreement implies recognition of any Soviet right to station its forces in the Baltic States, and declare their intention to make this occupation subject to any follow-on negotiations on reducing conventional forces. Soviet forces in the Baltic region total nearly 200,000.⁹ Given the official congratulations by Czechoslovakia and Poland to Lithuania's declaration of independence, it is possible that several of Moscow's current Warsaw Pact allies would make a declaration on the Baltics like that of NATO. U.S. diplomats quietly should ask East European governments if they are willing to join the West in issuing such a statement.

9 *The Military Balance, 1989-90* London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, pp. 38-39.

◆ ◆ **Press international organizations to admit the Baltic states as members.** The U.S. should press the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other international organizations to admit the Baltic republics as full and independent members. The U.S. should encourage the West Europeans to admit the Baltic states into European and regional organizations like the Council of Europe, established in 1948 as an organization of European parliamentary democracies. The Council already has invited the new democracies of Hungary and Czechoslovakia to join.

◆ ◆ **Press for Baltic independence to be on the forthcoming CSCE conference agenda.** Due to convene this fall, though the date and place are not settled, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is a gathering of nearly all the countries of Europe plus the U.S. and Canada. Convened at Moscow's insistence, it will discuss current developments in Europe, like German reunification, expanded economic cooperation, and military security. Added to the agenda should be Baltic independence. The Americans, Europeans, and Soviets could discuss the removal of Soviet troops from Baltic territories, the restructuring of the Baltic states' economic ties, and the impact of independence on regional security. Since CSCE includes every European state except Albania, which has refused to participate, the U.S. should insist upon Baltic participation.

◆ ◆ **Encourage America's Western allies to take the same measures.** The effects of U.S. support for Baltic independence would be magnified greatly were it part of a united Western effort. This requires Washington's leadership in supporting the Baltics and coordinating a joint Western response. The U.S. also should encourage its allies to link improved economic ties with Moscow to a peaceful transition to independence in the Baltic states. Washington, however, should not make its own actions conditional on a united Western front.

CONCLUSION

For half a century, America has pressed the Soviet Union to restore independence to the Baltic republics. And for half a century, these rhetorical demands were easy to make because there was little danger that there would be any need to act on them.

Now, largely through their own courageous efforts, the peoples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have taken the first decisive steps toward restoration of their independence. They have held democratic elections under often adverse conditions and delivered a solid mandate to their new governments to move toward independence. These governments reflexively and understandably have turned to the West as new members of the international democratic community and requested recognition and assistance. So far, the response has been meek.

Preventing Force. Moscow is demonstrating its intention to suppress the Baltic states, certainly by heavy-handed intimidation and possibly by force. It is before force is used that America must move to prevent it.

Gorbachev, almost beyond doubt, prefers to avoid force. Given his desires to improve his image in the West and to secure the benefits of friendlier relations, he surely favors economic and political coercion to bring the Baltic states to heel. The new Baltic governments are prepared for an extended period of negotiation with Moscow and believe that they can survive the difficult times ahead. They are confident that the Soviet leadership ultimately will recognize that there is no alternative to negotiation.

It is in the West's interest that Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership reach this conclusion as quickly as possible. The West can help to even the odds between the Baltics and the Soviet Union by coming down clearly on the side of those struggling to achieve the goals that Western democracies warmly invoke. If the West keeps the Baltics at arm's length, Moscow is likely to conclude that the West will tolerate a crackdown for the sake of maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union.

U.S. Leadership. The U. S. role on Baltic independence is critical. No other Western country is likely to offer open support. The U.S. thus should grant formal recognition to the new democratic governments, include the Baltics in U.S. foreign assistance programs for Eastern Europe, warn Gorbachev that his use of force will torpedo his good economic and political relations with the U.S., support the admission by the Baltic states to international organizations, raise the issue of Baltic independence at this year's upcoming CSCE meeting, and coordinate a common Western approach on this issue.

The U.S. must formulate a policy that will encourage Moscow and the Soviet nationalities to address the problems of self-determination in a peaceful and negotiated manner. To do this, Washington should construct a package of incentives and penalties for the Soviet Union which clearly lays out the actions the United States is prepared to take to ensure that a cooperative approach produces benefits and a resort to force results in substantial costs.

Pushing A Peaceful Path. With their emphasis on a non-violent and negotiated approach to independence, the Baltic republics could serve as an important precedent for addressing the problem of the Soviet nationalities. By supporting their peaceful struggle for independence, the United States can help to push the process of Soviet decolonization along a peaceful and orderly path. What is at stake is the future of the Baltic republics, the hopes of the other Soviet peoples striving for freedom, and the possibility that the Soviet Union can shed its repressive past and emerge as a responsible and trustworthy member of the community of nations.

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CHRONOLOGY

- February 2, August 11, July 12, 1920** **The Soviet Union recognizes independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, respectively, and renounces all claims on their territory.**
- July 28, 1922** **U.S. grants diplomatic recognition to the Baltic republics.**
- August 23, 1939** **Hitler-Stalin Pact signed, dividing the Baltic states and Eastern Europe between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.**
- Sept. 28, Oct. 5, Oct. 10, 1939** **Moscow forces Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to sign treaties permitting Moscow to station its troops on their territory, respectively.**
- June-July 1940** **Moscow replaces independent Baltic governments with communist-controlled "People's Governments." Mass deportations of Baltic citizens to Siberia and Soviet Gulag begin.**
- July 21, 1940** **People's Governments in each republic ask for incorporation into the Soviet Union and nationalize all land and industrial enterprises.**
- June 22, 1941** **Nazi Germany attacks its Soviet ally and occupies the Baltic states.**
- 1944-1947** **Baltic forces fight to prevent reincorporation into the Soviet Union, but are defeated by Soviet military. Scattered resistance last until 1952.**
- Nov. 18, 1988; July 28, May 18, 1989** **Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania declare sovereignty .**

- March 26, 1989** **Democratic forces win majority** of Baltic seats in elections for the Soviet Union's Congress of People's Deputies.
- August 22, 1989** **Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declares** Hitler-Stalin Pact and Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union illegal and invalid.
- August 23, 1989** **Two million people participate** in the "Baltic Way," a human chain stretching from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius in a demonstration of Baltic solidarity and a popular commitment to independence.
- November 12, 1989** **Estonian Supreme Soviet declares** 1940 Soviet annexation to be null and void.
- December 20, 1989** **Lithuanian Communist Party votes** to separate from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
- December 28, 1989** **Soviet Congress of People's Deputies rules** Hitler-Stalin Pact illegal and invalid but refuses to strike down the treaties incorporating the Baltic states into the Soviet Union.
- February 24, 1990** **Estonian Citizens' Committees hold elections** for Congress of Estonia which represents the Republic of Estonia destroyed by the 1940 Soviet takeover.
- February 24, 1990** **Sajudis candidates sweep elections** for Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, winning two-thirds of the seats.
- March 11, 1990** **Lithuanian Supreme Soviet forms a government,** declares independence, and asks for negotiations with Moscow.
- March 18, 1990** **Independence forces win elections** for Estonian and Latvian Supreme Soviets.
- March 25, 1990** **Estonian Communist Party votes** to separate from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, after a six-month transition.