

# Gorbachev rejects Lithuanian independence

MOSCOW - Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev rejected Lithuania's declaration of independence and ruled out talks with the rebellious republic Tuesday, but lawmakers from the region said they were sure he'd soften his stance.

Gorbachev told the Congress of People's Deputies he considers the Lithuanian move "illegal and invalid" and said the Kremlin would not begin wholesale negotiations with republics seeking independence.

"We cannot talk about negotiations," he said. "You carry out negotiations with a foreign country."

Gorbachev, however, also urged patience and said Moscow's relations with the Baltic republic would continue unchanged for now in the wake

of Sunday's vote by Lithuanian lawmakers to break away from the Soviet Union.

Despite the Soviet leader's tough line, several deputies from the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia said they had strong reason to believe Moscow would nonetheless enter negotiations on independence for the three states, which were annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940.

"Gorbachev is a realist," said Lithuanian deputy Algimantas Chekuolis. "He'll change his stand."

Estonian lawmaker Endel Lippmaa said Estonia had already formed its delegation for independence negotiations, and Lithuanian deputy Nikolai Medvedev said he had been told talks might begin as early as Saturday.

In its attempt to turn Sunday's declaration into reality, Lithuania must work out with Moscow a daunting array of questions, including matters of territory, compensation, the status of thousands of Soviet soldiers, ownership of factories and land, and control of the police and KGB.

The Tass news agency said Lithuanian legislators declared Monday that their sons no longer need serve in the Soviet army. They appealed to Gorbachev to ensure the welfare of Lithuanian soldiers until negotiations start on mustering them out.

Lithuanian activist Arunya Contaitaite said Tuesday that 5,000 young Lithuanian men out of about 15,000 conscripts had refused to enter the army during this spring's draft.

With so many issues to decide, Sajudis, the Lithuanian pro-independence movement that now dominates the republic's government, wants to start talks right away. But Lithuanian Communist Party Chief Algirdas Brazauskas, who sounded out Gorbachev last week, said he did not believe Moscow would agree.

"I don't think Moscow will go for that," he said in an interview Monday on the plane from the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius to Moscow.

Gorbachev opened the second-day session of the Congress of People's Deputies on Tuesday by giving the 2,000 lawmakers an update on the government's reaction to the Lithuanian vote.

"I think it is illegal and invalid,"

he said. He won applause from the Congress when he said the Kremlin would not negotiate with republics seeking independence.

But he also added that a "political and judicial evaluation" was needed, and said Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov and a commission had begun studying the matter. He also proposed charging the Supreme Soviet, the Congress' working legislature, with beginning discussion of the push for independence in Estonia and Lithuania within the next two days.

Gorbachev did not appear overly angry at the Lithuanians, and even addressed a light joke in their direction. At one point, he referred to Lithuanians as "comrades," then paused and said: "I think they are comrades."

# Bush lifts Nicaraguan sanctions, requests aid

WASHINGTON - President Bush lifted trade sanctions against Nicaragua on Tuesday and asked Congress to swiftly approve a \$300 million down payment for rebuilding the nation's ravaged economy and speeding a transition to democracy.

Rushing to shore up the incoming government of President-elect Violeta Chamorro, Bush also pledged he will seek an additional \$200 million in fiscal 1991 which begins Oct. 1.

Bush coupled the request for Nicaragua with a challenge to Congress to approve a stalled aid package of \$500 million for Panama, where the United States installed a new government after deposing Manuel Antonio Noriega last December.

The president urged Congress to complete work by April 5 on money for both countries. All the funds would be diverted from the Pentagon's budget, perhaps the first real "peace divi-

dend" from the receding Cold War. "These nations need our help to heal deep wounds inflicted by years of strife and oppression, years of loss and deprivation," Bush said. "And we must act and act soon."

Rep. David Bonior, D-Mich., a member of the House leadership and among the foremost foes of past U.S. policy in Nicaragua, predicted Congress would approve the aid before recessing next month for Easter.

"For years we've been hearing speeches about what America could do if only Noriega and Ortega were gone," said Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., referring to the former Panamanian ruler and to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega who lost the election to Chamorro last month. "Well, Ortega and Noriega are history. It's time for Congress to deliver."

Bush announced his requests in a

41-minute news conference, during which he also fielded questions on topics ranging from the budget and foreign policy to baseball's labor dispute that threatens to delay the season's opener.

Opening his news conference, Bush announced he had lifted the five-year-old economic embargo against Nicaragua, one of the tools used by the United States to undermine the leftist government of Ortega.

The president also took steps to allow Nicaragua to resume shipping sugar to the United States and to make that nation eligible for duty-free treatment for a variety of other products.

While acknowledging some concern about the reluctance of the U.S.-backed Contra rebels to demobilize in Nicaragua, Bush said, "I'm less concerned than I was about the peaceful transfer of power, including the military."

Money for Panama and Nicaragua will be drawn from money allotted to the Pentagon, requiring a decision on which defense programs will be cut. Bush said that if Congress can't make up its mind about cutbacks by March 27, it should let him do the job himself.

Of the money for Nicaragua, \$75 million would be earmarked for economic restructuring, \$60 million for critical agricultural supplies, petroleum and medical supplies, another \$60 million for development projects and \$50 million to help with foreign debts.

Some \$10 million would help pay for "emergency employment programs," including ones designed to help turn soldiers into farmers. In addition, \$45 million would go toward helping speed the repatriation and resettlement of the U.S.-backed Contra forces and other refugees.

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Pam Hein, 472-2588. Subscription price is \$45 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1990 DAILY NEBRASKAN

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