

Soviets ease Lithuania's economic blockade

MOSCOW - The Soviet Union unexpectedly eased part of its economic blockade against Lithuania, nearly doubling the natural gas flowing into the Baltic republic, Lithuania's official radio said Sunday.

But a Lithuanian government spokesman said Sunday evening that the increased supply had not actually begun to arrive at the factory that was to receive it. The plant supplies Moscow with chemicals and fertilizers.

Residents of the Baltic republic, which declared independence March 11, organized a bicycle rally Sunday to show their defiance of the blockade.

Thousands more gathered in Cathedral Square in the capital, Vilnius, to hear the republic's orchestra perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, a music professor, has said that for him, the symphony symbolizes hope and humanity's "victory over slavery."

Word of the sudden easing of the gas restriction came after both Lithuania and a spokesman for President Mikhail Gorbachev praised a proposed compromise to their dispute offered by France and West Germany.

The two Western countries proposed Lithuania delay implementing its independence without rescinding the declaration itself.

The Soviet Union has cut off all oil supplies, and shipments of many manufactured goods, raw materials and food items in an effort to make Lithuania back away from the declaration of independence.

Vilnius Radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp. in London, said the industrial plant at Jonova, whose natural gas supplies had been drastically cut, was being resupplied. The plant supplies the Soviet Union with concentrated ammonium, resins, methanol and other products.

If the amount promised the plant were delivered, it would nearly double the total natural gas flowing into the republic.

But Paul Pauparas, manager of the Supreme Council legislature's information department, said in a telephone interview that no extra supplies of gas had been received as of Sunday evening.

Operators at the plant "have no exact information whether it will be really renewed or it is only promises," he said.

He said details of the agreement to

increase the flow of gas likely were provided directly to the plant director by Moscow, but that government officials in Vilnius had not been able to confirm specifics.

Earlier, Rita Radzavicius, a spokeswoman for the information department, had confirmed that the Jonova plant had started to receive its allotment of gas.

The radio said the Jonova plant was to receive about 105 million cubic feet of natural gas each day -- "almost sufficient for the plant to keep operating normally," it said.

Radio Vilnius said from the beginning of the blockade, all of Lithuania had been receiving about 123 million cubic feet of natural gas per day -- "just enough for everyday household needs." Before the blockade began, the republic received about 635 million cubic feet of natural gas a day.

Pauparas said the Jonova plant had been receiving only about 24.7 million cubic feet of gas a day, and that most of its major production facilities already had been shut down.

That meant a loss to the Soviet Union of chemicals and fertilizers normally supplied by the plant, he said, adding that Lithuania uses a

relatively small proportion of the products made there.

If the plant resumes full production, it will continue fulfilling its previous contracts, Pauparas said.

The radio said about 30 percent of the plant's work force, or more than 1,000 people, would be going back to work today. They had been forced out of work because of the gas shortage.

There was no official announcement by Moscow of a change of policy, but in an interview with the Tass news agency Saturday, the deputy chairman of the Soviet State Supply Committee Vladimir Kosyulin said Lithuania was receiving 30 percent of its normal share of natural gas. When the restriction went into effect more than a week ago, it was receiving only about 16 percent.

In the bicycle protest Sunday, many young Vilnius residents biked 6 miles from the legislative building in the city center to the outskirts of the city, said Radzavicius of the information bureau.

Many Lithuanian motorists, faced with strict rationing that limits them to about 7 gallons of gasoline a month, have simply parked their cars. Some

bus routes in Vilnius have been cut and the number of buses running on other lines has been reduced.

Radzavicius said the performance of Beethoven's Ninth was meant to be symbolic. During World War II, the British broadcast the symphony as a symbol of victory, because the opening notes correspond to "V" in Morse code.

Rita Dapkus of the information bureau estimated that about 20,000 people gathered in the capital's center to hear the Lithuanian Symphony Orchestra and the Kaunas National Choir perform Beethoven's last symphony.

Gorbachev demanded two weeks ago that Lithuania rescind new laws that exempted Lithuanians from the Soviet military draft, gave ownership of Communist Party buildings to Lithuania's independent Communists, and established new rules on citizenship that Russians living in Lithuania considered discriminatory.

When the demands were not met, the Kremlin imposed the economic blockade. Earlier, Moscow seized buildings, conducted military maneuvers and barred most foreigners from the republic of 3.8 million people.

Orr's advisers say Democrats are in for a 'rude awakening'

OMAHA - Gov. Kay Orr's political advisers say her Democratic opponents are mistaken if they think the governor's attempt to win a second term in office is doomed.

Norm Riffel, Republican state chairman, and Steve Mitchell of East Lansing, Mich., the governor's pollster, said Democrats who think Gov. Orr's job-performance rating is too low to win re-election are misreading the political situation.

Some Democratic Party leaders predict that she will lose in the November election, regardless of which of the seven Democrats wins his party's nomination in the May 15 primary.

David Hunter of Lincoln, 1st Congressional District Democratic chairman, said the most recent Omaha World-Herald Poll is "definitely significant and shows she is not reelectable. That is a perception among a number of Republicans, as well."

Mike Dugan, state Democratic chairman, said, "We have felt she is very vulnerable, and the poll corroborates that."

In the poll, 39 percent of those surveyed approved of Orr's performance and 51 percent disapproved.

Mitchell said the poll is misleading because the Democratic candidates have been campaigning against her.

"It's easy when the governor is running against a straw man for people to say, 'Oh, I don't know. I don't like the governor,'" Mitchell said.

Once those people have a chance to focus on the Democratic nominee and compare his record to Orr's record, Mitchell said, "they will go with

the governor."

In the surveys he has conducted for the Orr campaign, Mitchell said, Gov. Orr has led each of the four main Democratic candidates in head-to-head match ups.

Much of the fire from four major Democratic candidates -- Ben Nelson, Mike Boyle, Bill Harris and Bill

There will be a lot of issues out there to separate Kay Orr from the Democratic nominee.

Riffel
Republican state chairman

Hoppner -- has been directed at the governor, Mitchell and Riffel said. In the final days of the campaign, the two Republicans said, they expect the Democrats to train their guns more on each other.

"They are starting to talk about their opponents in the primary now and not the governor," Mitchell said.

Riffel said, "In the last two weeks they are going to work harder to show the differences between themselves. While they are doing that, they are going to more clearly define our opponent for the general election."

Hunter and Dugan said they do not

expect friction among the Democratic candidates in the primary campaign to divide the party for the fall campaign.

Now is the time for the candidates to make distinctions, Dugan said.

"That's campaigning," he said. "You can't expect them to buy TV time and newspaper ads and just put a big smile on their face and say, 'Please vote for me.'"

Differences between Hoppner and Nelson over a state lottery and Harris' criticism of other candidates on their abortion views are about as tough as the fighting is likely to get, Hunter said.

"They will make significant political points, but they will not kill each other," Hunter said.

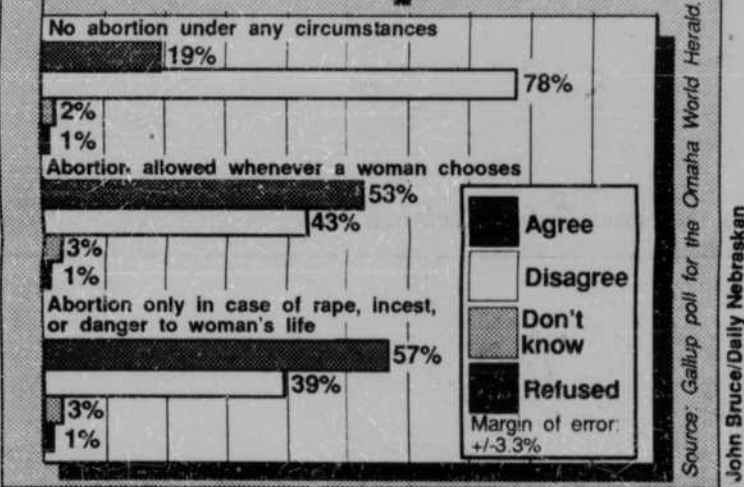
Hunter and Dugan said unity will come quickly after the election, although it is unlikely that the primary winner will have more than 30 to 35 percent of the Democratic vote.

The prospect of the Democratic nominee winning with less than 50 percent of the votes is another reason Riffel and Mitchell said they think Gov. Orr will be the favorite.

"I think that plays to our advantage," Riffel said. "The Democrat nominee can't claim a mandate to go on."

"There will be a lot of issues out there to separate Kay Orr from the Democratic nominee," Riffel said. "I hope they assume that their candidate is a shoo-in. I feel confident they will be in for a rude awakening."

Abortion poll



Poll shows Nebraskans opposed to abortion ban

OMAHA - Seventy-eight percent of Nebraskans questioned in a newspaper poll said they oppose a complete ban on abortion.

The poll, published in Sunday editions of the Omaha World-Herald, also showed that 53 percent of those surveyed said abortion should be permitted if a woman chooses to have one.

Nine hundred registered voters statewide were questioned about abortion by SRI-Gallup of Lincoln in telephone interviews April 18-20. The margin of error for the abortion questions was plus or minus 3.3 percentage points.

Those surveyed in The World-Herald Poll were asked three questions on abortion. The questions: "Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the follow-

ing statement about abortion: Abortion should not be allowed under any circumstances.

Abortion should be allowed if the woman chooses to have one.

Abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape or incest, or when the woman's life is in danger."

While 78 percent of those surveyed said they opposed a total ban on abortion, 19 percent said they favored a total abortion ban.

On leaving the abortion decision to women, 53 percent of those surveyed said they agreed the decision should be left to the woman and 43 percent said they disagreed.

Asked whether abortion should be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or danger to the life of the woman, 57 percent said they agreed and 39 percent said they disagreed.

Pony Express to allow women riders

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. - It took 130 years and threats of legal action, but women riders will be saddling up in June to join the ranks of 650 National Pony Express Association members on the 1990 rerun between Sacramento, Calif., and St. Joseph.

Ken Martin of Marysville, Kan., national president, said this week the organization's state chapters had voted to permit women to hit the trail with them in June.

The male-dominated organization had refused to allow women to take part in the annual 10-day ride from Missouri through Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California.

"The reason was that we are an historical organization," explained Martin. "Young, skinny wiry fellows carried the mail for the Pony Express back in 1860 and 1861, and we try to be as authentic as possible. There were no women Pony Express riders."

The organization, chartered in California in the late 1970s, was "open to all adult citizens 18 years old and older regardless of race, creed, sex, religion, nationality, or political affiliation."

Women who paid the annual \$10 national dues, however, learned an unwritten rule that kept them onlook-

ers, not riders. They poked fun at the claim of authenticity, pointing out that many of today's riders are portly men over age 50 who drive to their assigned trail rides in pickup trucks.

The decision to allow women riders did not come easy. Last fall national board members were threatened with legal action and possible loss of a tax exemption. It was decided that each state would poll its members this spring.

"The state chapters have voted to condone women to ride," Martin said recently. "We will have women riders in California and Nevada, and perhaps some other states."

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