

Thousands of protesters march, demand Gorbachev's resignation

MOSCOW - Hundreds of thousands of reformers marched Sunday to the edge of the Kremlin to demand that their onetime hero, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, resign for his role in the crackdown on Lithuania.

The crowd streamed into Manezh Square, near the Kremlin gardens and in sight of its mighty towers, under red, yellow and green Lithuanian flags. Participants also carried red, white and blue Russian flags, as well as banners denouncing Gorbachev.

Police estimated the crowd at up to 300,000.

In Leningrad, about 40,000 protesters marched to the square in front of the palace where the Russian czar once lived. Their banners read, "Lithuania, We Are With You," "Gorbachev Kills" and "Gorbachev Resign."

At the Moscow rally, Yuri Afanasiev, a historian and leader of the

Democratic Russia reform movement, told protesters that rallies were held in more than a dozen other major cities to protest the Jan. 13 military assault on the Lithuanian broadcast center that left 14 dead and hundreds wounded.

Afanasiev told them the two-hour rally was called to rebuff the reactionary course he said Gorbachev now is charting, and the crowd shouted, "Resign! Resign!"

Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, Gorbachev's most potent political rival, held him directly responsible for the killings in Lithuania and for the dismal state he said the country now is in.

"The danger of dictatorship ... has become a reality," said a Yeltsin statement, read by a supporter.

"The president has started on the course of whipping up ethnic passions, supporting self-proclaimed committees of salvation, striving for

power, on the path of justifying the use of weapons against a peaceful population."

When the army moved on the separatist Lithuanians, it said it was answering a plea from a previously unknown pro-Moscow group called the National Salvation Committee.

The rally's only quiet moment came when Afanasiev asked a moment of silence for Lithuania's dead. The protest was held exactly a year after a Soviet crackdown on ethnic militants in southern Azerbaijan republic left more than 130 people dead.

Many major reformers like Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze have left Gorbachev's inner circle, charging he is heading toward a dictatorship.

The crackdown on Lithuania appears to have re-energized reformers, who have appeared discouraged by Gorbachev's move to the right.

Former Liberian vice president claims presidential leadership

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone - The vice president of Liberia under slain leader Samuel Doe declared himself president Sunday, further complicating efforts to settle that nation's civil war.

Harry Moniba was the third person claiming to be Liberia's leader, though his close association with the discredited Doe will make him unpopular with many Liberians.

He made the declaration at a news conference in Sierra Leone, this West African nation neighboring Liberia, where he fled the war in September saying he feared for his life. Moniba said he believed his leadership could help resolve an apparent impasse in a peace process to build on a fragile truce.

He said a West African-backed interim government led by veteran politician Amos Sawyer was unconstitutional, and he called for Sawyer to resign.

Sawyer was chosen by exiled Liberian politicians, businessmen and church leaders at a conference sponsored by the Economic Community of West African States. He has been installed in Monrovia, the Liberian capital, under the protection of a five-nation West African army sent to force an end to the war.

The main rebel leader, Charles Taylor, is also opposed to Sawyer's leadership. Taylor has set up a rival administration in the northern Liberian town of Gbarnga. He calls himself president of Liberia, citing the fact that his men have overrun most of the country outside of Monrovia.

Taylor started the war with an invasion from Ivory Coast in December 1989, saying he wanted to oust a corrupt and brutally oppressive regime.

Doe was slain in Monrovia on Sept. 9 by rebels of a breakaway faction led by Prince Johnson.

Yugoslavian police on alert

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia - Special police units fanned out across the Croatian capital Sunday to prevent a possible move by the Yugoslav army against the independence-minded republic. Slovenia also readied its forces.

"If we are attacked by the army, we will shoot back, of course," declared a special police officer standing guard at a government building in Zagreb.

The two northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia have non-Communist governments that seek greater autonomy from the Yugoslav federa-

tion. They are worried that the central government will crack down while the world is preoccupied with war in the Persian Gulf.

Yugoslavia's collective federal presidency last week ordered all "illegal paramilitary groups" in the country disarmed and disbanded by Saturday. On that day, it extended the deadline until Tuesday.

It has instructed the Communist-dominated military to enforce the order thereafter.

Croatian authorities fear the order, which was vaguely worded, refers to their paramilitary police units.

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