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LITHUANIA: LATEST REPORTS

SUMMARY

1. COMMUNISTS LOYAL TO MOSCOW SEIZE PARTY BUILDINGS WITH MILITARY HELP. LITHUANIAN SUPREME COUNCIL INCLUDES SEVERAL MEMBERS OF OLD (COMMUNIST) GOVERNMENT IN NEW ADMINISTRATION. LANDSBERGIS TELLS GORBACHEV VOLUNTEER FORCE TO BE UNARMED GROUPS TO HELP CONTROL ORDER. MOSCOW DIRECTS LITHUANIAN PROCURATOR TO OBSERVE SOVIET JURISDICTION. FOREIGN JOURNALISTS ALLOWED TO TRAVEL TO LITHUANIA DESPITE RESTRICTIONS.

DETAIL

MILITARY ACTION

2. ACCORDING TO A BULLETIN SENT TO US BY FAX BY THE LITHUANIAN SUPREME COUNCIL INFORMATION CENTRE, COMMUNIST PARTY BUILDINGS IN VILNIUS WERE TAKEN OVER BY COMMUNISTS LOYAL TO MOSCOW ACCOMPANIED BY SOVIET TROOPS (IN ONE CASE 20 PARATROOPERS ARMED WITH AK-47 RIFLES). THE BULLETIN STATES THAT UNDER LITHUANIAN LAW THE PROPERTIES BELONG TO THE (INDEPENDENT) LITHUANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND MOST ARE LEASED TO NON-PARTY ORGANISATIONS. TASS HAS REPORTED THAT THE RUMP CPSU WILL KEEP CONTROL OF THE BUILDINGS UNTIL A SETTLEMENT ON JOINT USE OF PROPERTIES IS REACHED. THE BULLETIN ALSO REPORTED THAT DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OZOLAS TOLD AN AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ON 25 MARCH THAT THE MILITARY WERE PLANNING TO SEIZE THE SUPREME COUNCIL BUILDING.

3. THE ISSUE OF CONTROL OF BUILDINGS PREVIOUSLY BELONGING TO THE CPSU IN LITHUANIA WILL BE A SENSITIVE ONE FOR MOSCOW. DOUBTLESS THE OCCUPATION OF SOME OF THESE BUILDINGS WITH TROOPS IS DESIGNED TO INCREASE FURTHER THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON THE LITHUANIANS. BUT MOSCOW WILL CONSIDER THAT THEY HAVE A REASONABLE CLAIM TO MONITOR CONTROL OF SOME OF THESE BUILDINGS ON BEHALF OF THE CPSU (WHOSE LEGAL PROPERTY THE BUILDINGS DOUBTLESS ARE) PENDING A SETTLEMENT WITH THE LITHUANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. WITH A STRONG LIKELIHOOD OF SPLITS IN

THE CPSU OCCURRING IN OTHER REPUBLICS, DECISIONS ON THE OWNERSHIP OF THESE BUILDINGS IN LITHUANIA ALSO HAVE WIDER IMPLICATIONS.

4. THERE WAS SOME ALARM EARLY ON THE MORNING OF 24 MARCH WHEN A CONVOY OF MILITARY VEHICLES PASSED THROUGH THE CENTRE OF VILNIUS AS THE SUPREME COUNCIL SAT IN SESSION. A PRAVDA COMMENTARY QUOTED THAT LITHUANIAN REPORTS OF THIS WERE QUOTE COLOURFUL UNQUOTE

LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT

5. THE SUPREME COUNCIL SESSION OF 23 MARCH CONTINUED UNTIL THE EARLY HOURS DISCUSSING THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT. OF THE TEN MINISTERS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ELECTED BY SATURDAY MORNING WE UNDERSTAND FIVE WERE MEMBERS OF THE PREVIOUS LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT. ONE OF THE NEW MINISTERS, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, IS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT ALGIRDAS SAUDARGAS. THE LITHUANIAN PROSECUTOR (SEE BELOW) HAS BEEN REPLACED BY HIS DEPUTY ARTURAS PAULAUSKAS.

6. A TASS REPORT PRINTED IN IZVESITYA ON 24 MARCH NOTED THAT LANDSBERGIS HAD REPLIED TO GORBACHEV'S DEMAND THAT VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT FOR BORDER CONTROL AND OTHER DUTIES SHOULD BE STOPPED. ACCORDING TO TASS, THE REPLY ASSURED GORBACHEV THAT THE VOLUNTEERS WERE REGISTERING ONLY TO ASSIST WITH CONTROL OF SOCIAL ORDER; THEY WOULD NOT BE ARMED FORMATIONS. LANDSBERGIS HAS DESCRIBED THE CURRENT SITUATION AS A WAR OF NERVES, WITH LITHUANIA COMING UNDER CONTINUING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURE

PROCURACY

7. THE ACTING SOVIET PROCURATOR GENERAL VASILIEV SENT TELEGRAMS TO THE LITHUANIAN PROCURATOR BARAUSKAS, WHO HAS SINCE BEEN REPLACED BY THE NEW LITHUANIAN GOVERNOR, AND TO LANDSBERGIS. VASILIEV INSTRUCTS BARAUSKAS TO UPHOLD SOVIET LAW IN LITHUANIA IRRESPECTIVE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES DISAGREEMENT AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE ONLY TO THE SOVIET PROCURATOR. A TEAM OF 11 PROSECUTORS HAS BEEN SENT FROM MOSCOW TO HELP IMPLEMENT THIS INSTRUCTION. BARAUSKAS' SUCCESSOR PAULAUSKAS HAS SAID THAT THE TEAM WILL BE WELCOMED AS GUESTS. INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO BEEN ARRIVING IN LITHUANIA TO ASSIST WITH THE CONFISCATION OF WEAPONS. A COMMENTARY PUBLISHED IN PRAVDA OF 25 MARCH INSINUATED THAT THE LOCAL KGB AND MILITIA WERE CONNIVING WITH THE LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT TO OBSTRUCT THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES. CONTRARY TO THE PRAVDA REPORT LIBERAL DEPUTY ROY MEDVEDEV TOLD ME ON 23 MARCH THAT THE LOYALTIES OF THE PROCURACY AND MVD WERE SPLIT BADLY BUT THAT THE KGB AND ARMY WERE SOLIDLY BEHIND MOSCOW.

FOREIGN MINISTRY

8. AS YOU KNOW MANY WESTERN JOURNALISTS ARE STILL REPORTING FROM VILNIUS. SOME HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO EXTEND THEIR STAY. AT LEAST ONE BRITISH JOURNALIST HAS TRAVELLED TO VILNIUS SINCE THE TIGHTER RESRICTIONS ON FOREIGNERS TRAVELLING TO LITHUANIA WERE ANNOUNCED ON FRIDAY 23 MARCH. THE EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE OF ANY DIPLOMATS HAVING SECURED PERMISSION SINCE THE RESTRICTIONS WERE IMPOSED. DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS HAVE NOW RECEIVED A NOTE TO THE EFFECT THAT OFFICIALS NORMALLY ABLE TO TRAVEL WITHOUT LODGING FORMAL NOTIFICATION (COUNSELLORS AND ABOVE) WILL HAVE TO APPLY FOR PERMISSION TO VISIT LITHUANIA.

9. IT SEEMS THAT THE ORIGINAL INJUNCTION AGAINST FOREIGN VISITORS HAS BEEN RELAXED FOR MOSCOW BASED CORRESPONDENTS. IT SEEMS THAT WISE COUNSEL MAY HAVE PREVAILED AND THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE RECOGNISED THE INADVISABILITY OF AN EFFECTIVE NEWS BLACKOUT. AS CONCERNS DIPLOMATS, MOSCOW MAY BE SEEKING TO RESTRICT THE FLEDGLING GOVERNMENT'S (SAJUDIS') CONTACT WITH FOREIGN EMBASSIES BOTH BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE LEGAL IMPLICAITONS, AND TO SHOW WHO REALLY CONTROLS ENTRY INTO LITHUANIA.

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