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Special Analysis**USSR:****Baltic Nationalists Press Ahead**

Baltic nationalists and republic party sympathizers in Lithuania and Estonia are testing the limits of President Gorbachev's reform campaign and moving to institutionalize republic sovereignty. By putting into place daring reform programs and cutting organizational ties to Moscow, they hope to establish de facto independence as a prelude to a push for outright separation. Moscow will not allow the Baltic republics to secede but is prepared to grant them wide latitude in shaping local autonomy. [redacted]

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Frustrated with the slow pace of *perestroika*, Baltic officials, especially in Lithuania and Estonia, are pressing ahead with radical plans for economic and political reform. On Thursday the Supreme Soviet approved plans to institute republic self-financing in all three Baltic republics in January 1990—a year ahead of schedule—and to allow Lithuania and Estonia to proceed with controversial proposals for economic independence. At the same time, the Lithuanian legislature approved draft electoral laws that go beyond Gorbachev's political reform scheme in radically restructuring the republic state system. [redacted]

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Baltic organizations are now separating from Moscow. In Lithuania the party has called a congress this fall to consider breaking with the Soviet Communist Party, the Komsomol is severing ties to Moscow, and a group of militia officials has even suggested the republic's Internal Affairs Ministry be independent. Officials in Lithuania and Estonia are also building their own international relations. Lithuania's party chief visited Warsaw last month and signed a bilateral cultural cooperation program with Polish leader Jaruzelski; the Estonian premier headed a delegation to Malaysia, which reportedly refused Estonia's request for official status, to discuss joint venture opportunities. [redacted]

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Growing cooperation between nationalistic party organizations and popular-front activists is accelerating the pace of Baltic assertiveness. The top republic party leaders, reformists Gorbachev appointed last year, are ousting orthodox officials, publicly supporting many popular-front positions, and putting key moderates in leadership posts. They are acting out of political necessity—opinion polls give the local party organizations less than 10 percent of the vote in free elections—but also are increasingly confident about showing nationalist sympathies. Popular-front leaders in Estonia and

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USSR: Moscow's Indulgence

Moscow is prepared to accommodate many Baltic nationalist demands in order to help local party organizations gain legitimacy, to use the more advanced Baltic economies to support economic reform programs, and to bolster President Gorbachev's campaign of political decentralization. Gorbachev last month told Baltic deputies to the national Congress that he was ready to give them a great deal short of secession, although he also has indirectly warned them against taking measures that would harm local minorities, including ethnic Russians.

[Redacted] Moscow told the Estonians they could not have a separate foreign policy, army, or currency but were otherwise free to act. Even in those areas, however, Moscow has shown signs of compromise. In June Lithuanian party chief Brazauskas reportedly implied Gorbachev had approved a republic convertible currency for foreign transactions. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Gorbachev had ruled out using military force against Estonian nationalists.

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Lithuania were recently made deputy premiers and given leading roles in implementing republic economic autonomy. Events are moving more slowly in Latvia, where only 54 percent of the population is Latvian, largely because the orthodox, Russian-dominated party organization has cooperated much less with nationalists in the popular front. [redacted]

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Exploiting Perestroika

Party nationalists and popular-front members in Lithuania and Estonia ultimately want complete statehood but for now are willing to work within the system. A Lithuanian popular-front [redacted]

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[redacted] will work toward full independence from the USSR within the law. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Lithuanian party chief said last month that all Lithuanians share the goal of full independence but that economic autonomy and firm relations with the West are needed first. [redacted]

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By using legal and political channels, the Baltic republics are exploiting Gorbachev's program to decentralize power and create a state governed by law, not men. Republic party chiefs meet regularly with central leaders, especially Gorbachev and party ideology chief Medvedev, who seem to understand that in the Baltics party officials must display nationalist leanings if they are to have political influence. Under Gorbachev, the Politburo has seriously criticized the Baltic nationalists only when they have publicly promoted secession, making them confident that Moscow will not use force against them if they stay within the law. [redacted]

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How Far Will Moscow Let It Go?

Gorbachev is concerned nonetheless that an orthodox backlash to Baltic developments could undermine his entire reform program. The unrest in the Caucasus and Central Asia also may compel him to take a firmer line on Baltic autonomy. For now the Lithuanians and Estonians will avoid the direct confrontation with Moscow a declaration of independence would bring and will focus instead on the hard bargaining needed to win Moscow's approval for their radical reform programs. [redacted]

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The CPSU and Hopes for the Future

In May, a poll by party and academic organizations asked 2,000 Soviets: *Which organization's activities are linked to your hopes for an improvement in the state of affairs in the country?* The response:

Congress of People's Deputies	68 percent
Party as a whole	45 percent
Party Politburo	32 percent
Party Central Committee	30 percent

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