

# World & Nation

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The Battalion

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## Soviet leader will continue to push reforms

### Gorbachev gives Baltics autonomy

MOSCOW (AP) — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev on Sunday promised independence for the Baltic republics, but said he would not retreat from the battle to maintain the Soviet Union as a country.

"If independence 'is the final wish and intention of the people' of the Baltics, 'then I think we must agree to it,'" Gorbachev said in an interview on Soviet television and the Cable News Network.

"I will not resign now," he said. "That would be immoral."

Gorbachev's statement on the Baltics met with joy in Lithuania.

"I am glad that he has said this. This is the beginning of a new period in history," Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis told an estimated 20,000 people at a victory rally in Vilnius.

"Now there must be concrete talks on the withdrawal of Soviet troops," added Landsbergis, holding a bouquet of pink roses and white carnations.

Gorbachev spoke after meeting for 75 minutes in the Kremlin with British Prime Minister John Major, the first Western leader to visit Moscow since last month's attempted coup by hard-liners.

"Now is the time for the West to support us," Gorbachev told Major, according to an aide of the British leader.

Major also met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who returned to Moscow on Sunday

after discussions with Estonian and Latvian leaders about maintaining economic ties among former Soviet republics.

Despite their long rivalry, both Yeltsin and Gorbachev have been trying to prevent the union from evaporating in the power vacuum that has followed the Aug. 18-21 coup and the subsequent suspension of the Communist Party.

Gorbachev said in the TV interview that during a meeting earlier Sunday, 11 of the 15 republics agreed to maintain some form of union, although its exact shape is yet to be worked out.

Those not represented apparently were the Baltics and Moldavia.

"As far as economic cooperation, then here there is a large degree of agreement from all 15 republics," Gorbachev said.

"Now, at this very difficult stage when decisions must be taken that will define whether to preserve the course which we started in 1985, I cannot allow myself as a person, as a citizen, to leave," Gorbachev said, when asked if he would resign.

Gorbachev told the Supreme Soviet legislature after the coup that he would step down if the union were dissolved. He reiterated Sunday that "there is one condition" for his remaining in office: "The union."

Gorbachev said the issue of Baltic independence was on the agenda for this week's session of the 2,250-member Congress of People's

Deputies.

The Congress is the country's highest legislative body, but since its creation two years ago it has met only four times, to consider constitutional amendments and other critical matters. From among its members, the Congress elects the 542-member Supreme Soviet, which meets regularly and passes most of the country's laws.

Gorbachev did not make clear in the TV interview whether he has fully dropped his insistence that the Baltic republics follow the complex constitutional process for secession. That process could involve a waiting period of five years or more, and billions of dollars in compensation for Soviet investments.

He said his concept of a reformed union "opens the possibility for each republic, each nation, to make use of its constitutional right to self-determination. And in connection with that, if that is the final wish and intention of the people of these (Baltic) republics, then I think we must agree to it."

Gorbachev became emotional only when discussing the health of his wife, Raisa, who he said had a "very bad bout" during their three days under house arrest in the coup.

The Russian word for bout was translated as "heart attack" during the live television broadcast on CNN.

It is unclear exactly what happened to Mrs. Gorbachev. She was able to walk off an airplane on her return to Moscow after the coup.

## President Bush, Cabinet launch efforts for educational reforms

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine (AP) — President Bush and most of his Cabinet are headed back to school this week as the administration launches a renewed push for educational reforms and tries to dispel Democratic charges that they lack a domestic agenda.

Bush will end his summer vacation and at the same time open the new academic year Tuesday by visiting two public schools and delivering a back-to-school speech to students in Lewiston, Maine. After a year dominated by foreign policy crises, from the Persian Gulf War to the splintering of the Soviet Union, Bush is back trying to fulfill his campaign pledge to be the education president.

Come November, Bush will be heading abroad again, with journeys on tap to Europe and the Far East.

But for September and Octo-

ber, the White House will try to build pressure on Congress to act on a series of stalled domestic initiatives, from school reforms and a crime package to a national energy strategy and a \$105 billion highway bill.

"We're really looking forward to the fall ... trying to figure out how best to get congressional action on some of our programs," Bush said after the first of two recent strategy sessions with domestic advisers at his summer home here.

Bush and his lieutenants own up to frustration at their failure to get much of this legislation passed before now.

"Congress, contrary to their rhetoric, doesn't seem to have the interest in moving the domestic agenda forward," said deputy White House chief of staff Andrew Card. "It is frustrating."

Democrats in turn accuse Bush of being consumed with his avowed first interest, foreign affairs.

They say Bush has been missing in action on such pressing domestic problems as the cost and availability of health care.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, and Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill., have introduced major legislative proposals in recent months to expand health coverage in the workplace, and their party is certain to harp on the health issue in the 1992 campaign.

"We're going to have a domestic agenda and we hope the president will join with us," House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., said Thursday.

For the president, education is one domestic issue he can champion without worrying about the costs.

## Iran may have atomic power within 10 years

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said his nation would have several nuclear power plants within 10 years, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported Sunday.

It quoted Reza Amrollahi as saying in an interview Friday that "those who do not help Iran in this regard will lose," said the agency, monitored in Nicosia.

It said that his comment was a jab at Germany, which has refused to allow the German firm Siemens to complete a nuclear plant abandoned during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Amrollahi said the nuclear power plants would help overcome an acute shortage of electrical power in Iran.

Iran lacks the know-how to build the plants, and Amrollahi did not say if any other country had offered to help.

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