

Area residents watch independence efforts

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Local Baltic and Ukrainian communities are closely monitoring rapidly changing events in the Soviet Union, but, like so many observers throughout the world, they are having a hard time keeping up with a situation that changes on an almost hourly basis.

"The information is coming so fast," acknowledged Abel Pintson, an Estonian representative to the Rochester Baltic American Committee.

The past week has witnessed the republics of Latvia, Estonia and the Ukraine declaring their independence in the wake of a failed coup in the Soviet Union.

Those republics joined Lithuania, which declared its independence March 11, 1990. Meanwhile, Byelorussia declared its independence on Aug. 25 and Moldavia did so Aug. 27.

The republics of Armenia and Georgia

BALTIC BLOOD



Nijole Saladzius, a parishioner at St. George's Lithuanian Church in Rochester, was among the 150 people who attended the rally.

are also seeking independence.

The failed coup is in fact being credited for the sudden spate of independence declarations.

"They saw that force (of change) coming from Moscow, that the empire was crumbling," explained Walter Zacharkiw, a Ukrainian representative to the Rochester-area Baltic American Committee. "They saw the center coming apart."

Still, the rapid changes took Zacharkiw by surprise.

On Friday, Aug. 23, Zacharkiw participated in the third annual Black Ribbon Day at the Liberty Pole downtown. The event — which drew approximately 150 people — commemorated the 52nd anniversary of the signing of the pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, placing the Baltic states in the Soviet sphere of influence. That pact led to the Soviet occupation of the three nations.

During the rally, Zacharkiw speculated that the Ukraine would not follow the path of the independent Baltic republics in the immediate future because the country was so divided.

The next day, the Ukrainian Parliament nearly unanimously declared independence, pending a Dec. 1 referendum.

"We did not think it would come that quickly to the Ukraine," Zacharkiw said on Aug. 25, "but it looks like the citizens of the Ukraine demanded it."

Ray Liutkus, chairman of the Baltic American Committee in Rochester, noted that the republics were bolstered to declare independence so quickly after the collapse of communist power in the Soviet Union.

"Now we've seen the Russian communists falling on their knees, (the republics) are reestablishing their identities," he said.

At the same time, people in the republics know that the path they've chosen will not be an easy one, Zacharkiw said.

"There is euphoria now, but they have to settle into reality," Zacharkiw said. "At first it won't be different from under communism. But a lot of Ukrainians have traveled to the West. They know what can be done."

"By declaring independence, that doesn't mean the problems are over," ob-



Paulius Kilmas, a Lithuanian representative to the Rochester Baltic American Committee, peers through a barbed-wire wreath on display during the third annual Black Ribbon Day at the Liberty Pole Aug. 23.

served Pintson, who visited Estonia between June 14 and July 2 of this year. "For the last 50 years, they have been under the Russian yoke. (Estonia) is run down."

Because of Soviet economic policies over the last five decades, Pintson explained, the economies of the various republics are tied together and are dependent on government support. The newly independent republics will probably face many of the same problems the eastern European nations have encountered since they became free of communist control, he suggested.

"People know that hardship is coming," Pintson said. "It's not going to be honey and butter right away."

"It's not going to be a piece of cake," acknowledged Bruno Petrauskas, a Lithuanian who visited the Baltic state last April and May. "They're going to need a lot of help."

One advantage that the three Baltic republics have over the other republics is their history of working together, Petrauskas observed. He noted that the presidents of the three republics meet on a regular basis, and have created councils to coordinate policies among the nations.

Zacharkiw said that he could see the new republics forming some sort of a common market among themselves to help each other economically. The Ukraine itself has

been one of the Soviet Union's primary sources of grain, and the country will "not be hoarding the grain for itself," he said.

Meanwhile, the Baltic republics produce dairy products and meat which provide commodities for trade in addition to food, Petrauskas noted. And Pintson added that many families have gardens in which they raise nearly enough vegetables to help them get through the winter.

One area of concern, however, is that less fortunate republics — especially Russia — will find themselves in short supply this year as a result of the splintering of the Soviet Union.

Adding to this concern is the fact that Soviet troops remain stationed in the republics. Soviet naval bases and missile sites are also located in various republics.

"There will be soldiers with no place to go," suggested Girts Zadins, the Latvian representative on the Baltic American Council. "Until the Soviet military is withdrawn completely, we can not be fully independent."

At this point, however, there seems little chance for turning back, Petrauskas said — barring another coup.

"The people (are) determined to restore their freedom, their independence," Petrauskas concluded, adding, "and they (aren't) going to let anyone bully them into giving that up."

Local pro-lifers arrested in 'rescue' at Wichita clinic

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Six pro-life activists from the Rochester area were among the 85 demonstrators arrested in Wichita, Kan., on Friday, Aug. 23, after participating in a "rescue mission" at the office of Dr. George Tiller.

Robert Dorscheid, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church, 43 Gebhardt Road, Penfield, was among those arrested in front of the clinic. The pro-life activists left from Dorscheid's home in Penfield on Wednesday evening, Aug. 21, in order to participate in an anti-abortion rally, which drew an estimated 25,000 people on Sunday, Aug. 25.

Dorscheid said that he and five other pro-life activists who traveled with him to Wichita volunteered to help block the entrance to Tiller's office, where late-term abortions are performed. The rescue was coordinated by Operation Rescue, a non-denominational pro-life organization based in Binghamton.

The group has gained widespread attention over the last two months for targeting the Wichita doctor in a massive, on-going anti-abortion effort.

Members of Operation Rescue seek to stop abortions by blocking access to clinics where abortions are performed and by conducting "sidewalk counseling" in an effort to convince patients of the clinics not

to abort their pregnancies.

More than 2,600 activists have been arrested since demonstrations began on July 15.

According to Dorscheid, he and five other activists from Monroe County are scheduled to appear in court in Wichita in early November. He added, however, that a lawyer provided by Operation Rescue will appear on the activists' behalf.

Dorscheid also claimed that "sidewalk counselors" persuaded two women to not have abortions as activists blocked the entrance to Tiller's office.

Operation Rescue's efforts have been endorsed by Wichita Bishop Eugene Gerber, an endorsement sharply criticized by U.S. District Judge Patrick F. Kelly. The judge has jailed protesters for violating his order not to block clinics, and has attacked Bishop Gerber in court for not encouraging people to obey the law.

"I hear nothing from this bishop saying, 'Stop this madness,'" said Kelly, a Catholic. "Of all the people in this city who ought to respond, it's him."

The real madness is abortion on demand, not the civil disobedience of Operation Rescue, Bishop Gerber told the crowd attending the Aug. 25 rally at Wichita State University. The rally was sponsored by Operation Rescue.

"The real madness is legalized abortion on demand," Bishop Gerber said. "The

real madness is singling out disabled unborn children for killing."

The main speaker at the rally, TV evangelist Pat Robertson, urged the abortion foes to continue the Wichita campaign and to impeach Kelly.

On Aug. 24, about 6,000 abortion-rights activists staged their own rally on the banks of the Arkansas River, drawing many national feminist leaders.

"Operation Rescue is a mere footnote, a pathetic, miserable little footnote in political history," said Eleanor Smeal of the

Fund for the Feminist Majority.

Kate Michelman, executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League, said that despite the massive publicity the Wichita protests have brought Operation Rescue, public opinion has turned against the group. A local poll by the *Wichita Eagle* showed more than two-thirds of residents oppose Operation Rescue's tactics.

Contains additional information from Catholic News Service.

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