

pre-war flag and national anthem alongside the Soviet ones. In October, these symbols replaced their Soviet counterparts. On 19 November, a proclamation was issued making the Lithuanian language a mandatory requirement within two years for all state employees. Russian and Polish nationals reacted in a mass rally under the name "Unity" to protest the language laws. In January 1989, the independence day of the 1918 Lithuanian Republic (16 February) was declared a national holiday. Nonetheless, initiatives on economic and political autonomy were conspicuous by their absence.

However, by spring 1989, a change in Party attitudes came about. Much of this can be attributed to the success of Sajudis in the March 1989 elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies. Communist Party members also became infected with the nationalism of the previous year. On 18 May, the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet finally declared Lithuania sovereign, six months after Estonia had done so.

Lithuania reinforced its new, tougher stance by actions in the Congress of People's Deputies. For example, fifty of the fifty-eight Lithuanian deputies walked out on the voting to establish a Constitutional Commission, fearing that it would encroach upon the sovereignty of the republics. President Gorbachev insisted on the vote, registering the walkout as abstentions. However, after the walkout, a final decision on the commission was deferred.

In June 1989, the Lithuanian Communist Party youth declared itself independent of the Soviet youth organization. At the same time, the senior party rewrote its constitution to allow for a multi-party system -- a measure adopted in the Lithuanian constitution in December. In November, the Party organized a Commission to Regain Independence. Then, on 20 December 1989, the Lithuanian Communist Party voted to reconstitute itself as a separate party from its Soviet counterpart, the first such break in the monolithic CPSU.

This crisis generated a special CPSU Central Committee meeting in Moscow to deal with the Lithuanian actions. Over the following month, President Gorbachev negotiated personally with Lithuanian leaders, and publicly through the media and by visits to the Republic, but to no avail. Negotiation with the Communist leaders of Lithuania became irrelevant when on 24 February 1990, after the first multi-party elections in post-war Lithuania, Sajudis came to power.

Activities at the all-Union level influenced Sajudis' timetable. The new Lithuanian parliament rushed through a vote of independence, which was passed on 11 March 1990. This was done to pre-empt the Congress of People's Deputies' consideration of a new executive presidency, which could give Gorbachev new, sweeping powers in dealing with the crisis.

The declaration of independence was a new step in Soviet-Republic relations. The new president, Vytautas Landsbergis -- a concert pianist by profession -- declared illegal the 1940 vote of accession to the Union. The 1938 constitution was reinstated as the underpinning of a future "Basic Law." The new name of the country would be the Lithuanian Republic: "Soviet Socialist" was dropped. Refusing to characterize it as a "secession" from the Union, Landsbergis' declaration denied the validity of Lithuania ever having been a part of the USSR; Lithuania could not secede from that to which it had never legitimately belonged. This difference remains a major