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By Michael Dobbs
Washington Post Foreign Service

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Jan. 13 (Sunday)—Soviet army troops stormed the Lithuanian republic's radio and television station here early this morning, reportedly killing at least 11 and injuring 100. A National Salvation Committee, backed by the pro-Moscow Lithuanian Communist Party, declared that it had taken control of the republic.

The assault represented a major escalation in the Soviet government's use of force against this secessionist republic and the bloodiest military assault on peaceful citizens

since troops killed nine nationalist demonstrators in Georgia in 1989. The renunciation of force in such political conflicts has been one of the central tenets of President Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, which reformist politicians have said recently is threatened by resurgent conservative forces.

It was not immediately clear what role, if any, Gorbachev had in ordering the assault. The attack came after Gorbachev's cabinet had demanded Saturday that peaceful "political methods" be used to resolve the crisis between Moscow and this secessionist republic.

About 30 tanks and armored ve-

hicles rolled up to the television and radio station about 2 a.m. Lithuanians outside the building screamed at the troops and tried to block them. Soldiers fired into the air and beat people with the butts of their rifles.

Soldiers then smashed through the glass windows of the station and overwhelmed defenders armed with sticks who had hastily erected barricades of furniture.

A crowd of around 50 people tried to cut off the tanks by standing in front of the procession and then trying to climb aboard the first tank as it approached the station. But the tank accelerated and people

fell off. Reporters said they saw one person crushed under the tank.

A Danish radio reporter said he saw two corpses. Lithuanian officials said the death toll was 11 and hospitals were filling up with wounded. A Lithuanian cameraman said he was beaten by soldiers wielding their rifle butts.

The television and radio stations, which broadcast throughout the republic, went off the air after the assault. Just before the radio station shut down, an announcer said, "We address all those who hear us. It is possible that [the army] can break us with force or close our mouths,

See VILNIUS, A14, Col. 1

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Soviet tanks move past vehicles forming a barricade around TV-radio center.

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Soviet Troops Seize Lithuanian TV; Pro-Communist Group Claims to Rule

VILNIUS, From A1

but no one will make us renounce freedom and independence."

Outside the station, the troops fired shots and a stun grenade to disperse the crowd. But Lithuanians, many of whom had followed the troops to the station in motorcades, remained around it, chanting "Fascist Bastards!" Others in the crowd sang the Lithuanian anthem and chanted "Lithuania! Lithuania!"

One policeman said, "We're meant to be at peace, but they are making this into a war." Asked who had taken power, he replied, "The Communists, the bastards."

The head of the Lithuanian national security department said he thought the troops were not controlled by Moscow, but there was no confirmation of this.

Loudspeakers on armored vehicles announced that a Committee for National Salvation had taken power in Lithuania and that all resistance was futile. The committee claimed to speak for "all workers and peasants." The voice in the loudspeaker broadcasts reportedly was that of Mykolas Burokavicius, the leader of the hard-line Lithuanian Communist Party.

Lithuanian television has served as a key means of communication keeping people informed on a 24-hour basis of the Soviet military movements and popular protests that have marked the current confrontation between the Lithuanian and Soviet governments. Gorbachev has warned Lithuania to retract its declaration that the Soviet constitution is invalid in the republic and has sent extra troops to enforce his order that Lithuanian draft resisters be rounded up.

The Kremlin has been supported in this republic by the large minority of ethnic Russian workers here who want Lithuania to remain within the Soviet Union and say they are discriminated against by the republic's separatist government.

Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union after World War II, along with its neighboring Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia. Last March, it became the first of several Soviet republics to declare independence from the Soviet Union.

In recent days, activists from all three independence-minded Baltic states have expressed concern that a crackdown could come while the world's attention is focused on the possibility of war in the Persian Gulf around the Jan. 15 deadline for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

In Moscow, an Estonian leader, Edgar Savisaar, said, "I would not rule out the possibility that Latvia and Estonia would experience next week what is happening in Lithuania now. The goal of conservatives here

in Moscow is to get rid of the opposition in Vilnius by Jan. 15 and then fix Riga and Tallin," the Latvian and Estonian capitals.

Before the radio went off the air, Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis spoke, telling Lithuanians that he had failed to reach Gorbachev by telephone, but had contacted the president of the Russian republic, Boris Yeltsin, who had said he would speak to Gorbachev.

One member of the Russian parliament, speaking in the Lithuanian legislature, said, "The end of democracy in Lithuania will mean the end of democracy in Russia."

Landsbergis called the Lithuanian parliament into emergency session at its chambers, which many legislators said early today they feared would be seized next by the troops. The four-story building was fortified with sandbags and guarded by 750 Lithuanians armed with hunting rifles, molotov cocktails and fire hoses.

The parliament session began in the predawn hours, in a chamber that bore the air both of a legislature and a bunker. Some deputies carried khaki rucksacks containing gas masks and the lights inside were kept dim. A Catholic priest began the session with a blessing.

Landsbergis, a pianist who was one of the founders of the Lithuanian independence movement, Sajudis, spoke to the deputies in somber tones. "The world doesn't seem to have paid too much attention to us," he said at one point. "At least that is how it looks from here."

Deputies expressed concern that their government—elected in multi-candidate elections last year—might be forced out of power. In that case, they voted, its authority would automatically be transferred to the foreign minister, who is visiting Poland, and to the charge d'affaires of the Lithuanian legation in Washington. Landsbergis proposed that, in the event of an overthrow, they could form a government in exile.

A crowd of around 10,000 people surrounded the Lithuanian parliament during its early morning emergency session, but deputies asked that women and children return home in case of attack. Gunfire could be heard as long as two hours after the raid on the TV station.

Thousands of Lithuanians continued to surround other strategic sites, including government buildings and the international telephone exchange.

One of Landsbergis' deputies, Kazimeras Moitėka, said the Lithuanians would try to defend themselves against army attack but they knew they were facing an overwhelming force. There are about 92,000 army troops regularly stationed in the

public, and 3,000 specially trained paratroops arrived in the republic earlier this week.

By comparison, the Lithuanians have a poorly equipped and organized force of about 2,500 in their National Security Department. Police in the republic are said to be loyal to the Lithuanian government.

This morning's assault on the broadcast station came after a day in which troops movements and statements by Lithuanian leaders had appeared to signal a relaxation in the week-long confrontation.

Soviet tanks and armored cars, which spearheaded earlier raids on government buildings around Vilnius over the last 24 hours, had pulled back to a nearby military base shortly before dawn Saturday. Soviet troops kept control of several buildings in the city, including the main publishing house and the Lithuanian national security department.

The brief relaxation in tension here appeared closely linked to a meeting in Moscow between Gorbachev and the leaders of the Soviet Union's 15 republics that was dominated by the situation in Lithuania. In an apparent rebuff to hard-liners, the Federation Council insisted that talks be used to resolve the crisis and dispatched a delegation to Vilnius to meet Lithuanian leaders.

Lithuanian leaders had also received a psychological boost Friday when Russian President Yeltsin condemned any use of the army against a democratically elected republican government. Lithuanian activists made thousands of copies of Yeltsin's statement and handed them out to Soviet soldiers around Vilnius.