

Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary

June 19, 1988.

In the end of April I was in Volynskoe-2. We were working on a draft of the theses for the XIX conference, which M.S. re-dictated... I had to insist on, with Shevardnadze's help, having some self-assessment in the international section. He agreed... this is a historical shift... For the first time we are speaking critically about our foreign policy prior to 1985.

For the Conference report I prepared an even more critical version, leading to ideas about the evolution of imperialism... Which, however, Honecker has already noted in the theses and in his circle has expressed his disagreement. Same with Bilyak. In general, our friends are very afraid of *perestroika* and new thinking.

We took a break from Volynskoe-2 due to Reagan's visit.

You can't say more about it than is already said in our press and theirs. But from my perspective--M.S. guessed what would touch Reagan's emotions. And he did precisely that... Reagan saw that we are not an "empire of evil," but normal people, with a rich history at that, and... we are such a giant that you cannot intimidate or dazzle us. And this works. Reagan still keeps telling everyone how he walked around the Red Square and Arbat. He sent M.S. a personal letter, "To Mikhail from Ron." I prepared a draft response, "To Ron from Mikhail," but M.S. has been sitting on it for the third day already--either he is too busy or he is thinking it over.

Immediately after Reagan we re-located to Novo-Ogarevo (to prepare the party conference).¹ M.S. came every morning at 10 and we worked together till 10-11 in the evening. He re-dictated our drafts.

When I speak of "we" I mean Yakovlev, Medvedev, Lukyanov, Frolov, Shakhnazarov, Boldin, and myself. Nobody else...

The project to re-structure the political system will shock, first and foremost, his colleagues at the PB... He sent out the reports (104 pgs) two days ago. The discussion at the PB will be tomorrow.

It will stun them because the majority of them will not have high-level positions in the new system.

M.S. hesitated for a long time and thought out loud in front of us: he started the section by saying that he will resign, but offers the following structure (the General Secretary becomes Chairman not of the Presidium but of the USSR Supreme Soviet, i.e. "the President"). And let the conference... or later the Congress of the Soviets (a new institution) decide on this question...

He moved away from this thought with the refrain that "I do not need a new burden." It is true that *perestroika* will not take place if it is not enforced from the top. The only people who want and can enforce it are M.S. and maybe 2-3 more members of the Politburo, and a part of the CC Secretaries.

So this decision will really decide our fate.

Nevertheless, even judging by the very critical and skeptical letters and press,

¹ Novo-Ogarevo was a state house (dacha) near Moscow where advisers and speechwriters gathered to draft Gorbachev's speeches and other documents.

everybody understands that *perestroika* is Gorbachev, and if he disappears, everything will fall through under the current PB.

When M.S. was with us, Frolov told an anecdote that his daughter brought from MGU [Moscow State University]: “It is the opening of the XIX party conference. The first person to enter the Presidium is Ivan Susanin, then Gorbachev, and then the rest. Susanin leads Gorbachev to the Chairman’s place, and tells the rest: ‘As for you, we are going to keep walking...’” Everybody laughs, and M.S. even more than everybody else. Truly, this is the voice of the people.

In the breaks in Novo-Ogarevo there were meetings with Najibullah and Cardinal Casaroli. Both were significant. Najibullah showed himself to be weak, confused, and incompetent (he asked us to leave Polyanychko--an adviser from the KGB--with him); he offered to organize a joint war: USSR-India-Afghanistan against Pakistan. He asked us to conduct major operations with the participation of the Soviet troops (although in the third echelon) against the mujahedeen... to lift the moral spirits of the Afghani troops... “And if they run away?”--M.S. rebuffed him pretty bluntly on both counts.

The conversation with the Cardinal was philosophical. This man, behind whom stands all the wisdom of millennia of Christianity and all the cunning of a Jesuit, he understood that he was dealing with a man who is opening the door into a new era for humanity.

M.S. did not send out a record of his talk with Casaroli around the PB. He doesn’t want to tease the geese--an expression he’s been using for all kinds of occasions lately. Of course, they would not “understand” this conversation.

The press is raging about Stalin, Brezhnev, and the present-day epigones. There are unbelievably frank discussions of the theses and of how the apparatus stifled the elections to the party conference. The Moscow party conference discussed the episodes with Afanasiev and Gelman. M.S. defended the latter and “suggested” to Zaikov to remove Afanasiev, whom the raikom failed to elect...

Afanasiev paid us back (as M.S. told us in Novo-Ogarevo) by starting an affair with an Italian student, visiting her regularly at the hotel where she lives while she completes her school training and represents the CIA at the same time.

[Source: Anatoly Chernyaev Diary Manuscript, on file at the National Security Archive. Translated by Anna Melyakova]