

Anatoly Chernyaev's Diary, 1991, excerpt.

Three Days in Foros

Soon after I got back to Moscow, I related what I saw and heard while I was with M.S. in Foros¹ from August 18-19th, 1991, in interviews to Sasha Bezymenskaya for *Der Spiegel*, A. Lyubimov for the TV program "Vzglyad" [The View], as well as the newspaper *Izvestia* and the American magazine *Time*. Here I will try to bring everything together.

A few preliminary explanations. I should decipher some names before I begin. Olga—Olga Vasilievna Lanina, an assistant in the President's Secretariat. Tamara or Toma—Tamara Alekseyevna Aleksandrova, my assistant as the President's adviser. Shakh—Georgy Khosroevich Shakhnazarov, who was also the President's adviser at the time. The initials M.S. and R.M. do not require explanation. "Yuzhnyi" is a sanatorium, 12km from "Zarya," where Olga, Tamara and I spent the nights and where we also went during the day for lunch. We worked in an office around 50 meters away from Gorbachev's house.

While I made entries into my diary, I would turn on "Mayak" (a continuous information radio program) every half an hour. In between new broadcasts, "Mayak" played symphonies and music from Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake*, which became sickening in that atmosphere. For millions of listeners afterwards, this music became forever associated with the coup. The information I heard on "Mayak" I immediately recorded in my diary; I reproduce these entries here in a different font, even though they interrupt the text.

Thus, to the diary.

August 21, 1991, Crimea, Dacha "Zarya"

Looks like it is time to start recording the events. If I don't do it, nobody else will. And I happened to witness a turning point in history.

On the 18th, Sunday, after lunch at "Yuzhnyi," Olga and I came back to work. Tamara asked to stay at the hotel, since it was Sunday. We really did not have any urgent work to do. The two of us would have managed without a problem. The speech for the occasion of signing the Union Treaty was ready. Gorbachev altered it a couple times, kept asking Shakhnazarov and me to "increase the scope" of it, and from me he wanted more "style," too. G.Kh. is on vacation in "Yuzhnyi" here, he did not join us in our work at Gorbachev's dacha, though he was in contact with M.S. over the phone.

So, around 4 p.m., Olga and I entered the dacha grounds.

At the entrance, as usual, there were two police cars and a spike strip on the ground,² which was moved away for us.

¹ After the coup, "Foros" became the proper noun [associated with the events]. In reality, it is a beach town located 5-6 kilometers (along the coast) from the Presidential dacha, which is called "Zarya."

[Author's note]

² By the way, this spike strip was there from the moment of the President's arrival in the Crimea (though it hadn't been there in the two previous years), not from the start of the coup. [Author's note]

Around 5 p.m., Olga ran into my office, saying, "Anatoly Sergeevich, what's going on? Boldin is here, together with Baklanov and Shenin, and another general, tall and in glasses, I don't know him." (Later we found out it was Varennikov). I looked out my door... there was a congregation of cars at the entrance to our building, all of them with antennas, some with emergency lights... and a crowd of drivers and security personnel. I looked out the window facing M.S.' house and saw a gloomy Plekhanov walking down the path. From a distance, I could see Boldin on the balcony.

Olga said, "Anatoly Sergeevich, something is going on here... You know that communication lines have been disconnected?" I picked up the receiver... the first, second, third, including the secure line³ –silence. We started guessing. Aloud, I brainstormed that there might be some new power plant accident (because Baklanov was among those present), recently there was a report of some failures at the Tiraspol power plants, and on one of the Chernobyl blocks...

But it turned out to be much worse!

Four people were with M.S.

Plekhanov, Generalov (his deputy), and Medvedev were sitting on the stairs under my window... They glanced when I approached the window. I turned on the transistor radio: it played normal programming. Then it was reported that M.S. greeted some conference, that he conveyed a message to Najibullah on the occasion of "their" holiday (I made the drafts)...

In about an hour, the four departed. Plekhanov also left, taking Medvedev with him. Medvedev was the President's personal guard; on all the official photographs and on the TV screen he stood at his back and never left him anywhere. This time he went to Moscow, abandoning and betraying "his President." This already was a sign. Even when I was telling Olga about the power plant, I understood that this was actually about Gorbachev.

The phone lines were disconnected completely.

Earlier, when we were on the way to the office, Olga asked to be released early, around 5 p.m., so she could go for a swim, etc. Now, the car did not arrive to get her. I told the driver to pick me up at 6:30, but he did not come for me, either. I asked the security guard on duty to get whoever was in charge to explain to me what was going on.

About 10 minutes later, Vyacheslav Vladimirovich Generalov showed up. We became well acquainted during Gorbachev's trips abroad, where he usually was in charge of security. He is very polite. He asked Olga to leave us alone and took a seat. "Anatoly Sergeevich, don't get me wrong. They left me in charge here. I have orders not to let anyone out. Even if I allowed you to leave the premises, you would be immediately detained by the border guards: there is a triple semi-circle [of guards] from one sea shore to the other. The road to Sevastopol-Yalta is closed off around here. You can see, there are three ships already at sea..."

I asked him an innocent question: "What about signing the Union Treaty tomorrow?"

³ A government communications point, located in Mukhalatka, 20 km from "Zarya" in the direction of Yalta. There was a connection through the telephone operators working in the KGB. [Author's note]

He replied: "It will not be signed. The plane that came for M.S. was sent back to Moscow. The garages with his cars are sealed, and they guarded not by my people, but gunmen who were sent over here. I cannot even allow the extended service staff (local people— gardeners, cooks, cleaning ladies) to go home. I don't know where I'm going to house them."

I again asked a naïve question: "But how can this be—my things are in "Yuzhnyi," and finally, it is time for dinner! Tamara Alekseyevna is there, she is probably worried and doesn't know what's going on." I understood what a terrible position she was in when we did not return to the sanatorium in the evening. Later she told me how worried she was, and how she tried to contact us. But phone lines were cut off there as well. And she was refused a car.

He said: "There is nothing I can do. Please understand me, Anatoly Sergeevich. I am a military man. I have my orders... nobody is to leave the premises! And no calling."

He left. Olga came back. She is lively, sharp, and smart (recently married, has a 1.5 year old child, and her husband Kolya is here, he is a driver for one of the presidential cars). She started to rail against Boldin, who was her boss a long time ago. She cannot stand him: "Why did he show up here? To show that he's already kissing ... off his bosses?" And more along those lines. Time was passing by stupidly.

It was getting dark when handsome Boris, Gorbachev's new guard (replacing Medvedev), told me that M.S. is asking me to come outside. He was nearby, Boris said, taking a walk around the dacha.

I quickly got dressed. As I walked out, I was thinking: in what state will he be when I see him? How is he?

(10 a.m.⁴ "Mayak" is broadcasting the message from the commandant of Moscow. The first clashes took place at night; attacks on the armored vehicles and patrols on Smolenskaya Square (by the way, near the building where I live in Moscow. What my family must feel!) and by the building of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet and the hotel. There are some killed and wounded. This means first blood. The Commandant is blaming everything on "disorderly elements" and criminals...).

(12 p.m. on "Mayak": Ivashko said in an address to Yanaev: the PB and the CC Secretariat cannot make a judgment about the events until they meet with the General Secretary of the CC CPSU, Gorbachev! This is something! Especially after the spilled blood).

To continue: M.S., R.M., their daughter Ira and her husband Tolya were standing by the entrance to the dacha. We joked—some people are cold, some hot: M.S. was wearing a warm sweater, because two days ago his back acted up again, old sciatica came back. When he was young he swam in an ice-hole and was a winter-swimmer, from which he got this ailment. M.S. mentioned that "doctors told him to take care of himself." In general he is afraid of drafts.

He was calm, even-tempered, and smiling. "Do you know what happened?" he asked.

⁴ This is the morning of August 21st. As I mentioned earlier, I started recording the events in my diary on the 21st, and every now and then I interrupt the narrative to record what I heard on radio "Mayak."
[Author's note]

“No, how would I know! I only watched from my window. I saw Plekhanov, Boldin. I heard there was another one, some general, tall and in glasses... and Baklanov.”

“The general was Varennikov. He was the most active of the group. Listen, I want you to know what happened.”

R.M. said, “They walked in without asking, without warning. Plekhanov was leading them and the guards stepped out of his way. It was completely unexpected. I was sitting in an armchair, they walked by me and only Baklanov said hello. Not Boldin! We were on the best of terms for 15 years! He was like a relative to us, we trusted him with everything, even the most intimate things!!!”

M.S. stopped her, and said to me, “Listen. They sat down, I asked them ‘What have you come to me with?’ Baklanov started speaking, but Varennikov talked the most. Shenin was quiet. Boldin tried to say something once—‘Mikhail Sergeevich, don’t you understand what kind of the situation this is!!’ I told him, ‘You’re a scumbag [*mudak*] and better keep your mouth shut. You came here to give me a lecture on the situation in the country.’” (He said the word scumbag [*mudak*] in front of the ladies. Ira laughed and interpreted it as “mutant” [*mutant*], which was very fitting. She is very smart and educated in general).

M.S. continued, “In a word, they offered me two options: either transfer my powers to Yanaev and agree to a state of emergency, or renounce the presidency. They tried to blackmail me,” he did not explain how, “I told them, ‘You could have guessed that I would not agree to either option. You are trying to arrange a coup d’état. What you want to do with this Committee and such—it is unconstitutional and illegal. It is a gamble that will lead to blood and a civil war.’ The general started to argue that they will ‘ensure’ that it does not come to that. I said, ‘Excuse me, Cde. Varennikov, but I don’t remember your full name...’

He replied, ‘Valentin Ivanovich.’

‘So, Valentin Ivanovich—society is not a battalion. No ‘Left and march step,’ for you. Your undertaking will resound with a terrible tragedy, all the things that started coming together now, they will be broken. Let’s suppose you put everyone down, you disband the government, you install troops everywhere... and then what? You caught me as I was working on an article.’”⁵

⁵Judging by the article, he foresaw the possible scenarios, including the “emergency” option. It contained an extensive, detailed analysis of our economic, social, and political situation. There was also an understanding of the deep dissatisfaction and tension in society, as well as the danger that this tension would spill out. Gorbachev analyzed which methods of emerging from the crisis were acceptable, which should be chosen, and which should be rejected immediately, despite the severity of the situation. The process of agreement through the “9+1” formula was underway; we were on the verge of signing the Union Treaty that would change the situation in the country radically. It would become the turning point in the development of the state and society; a point when new structures could be created, and the decisions could be implemented more quickly. The most important thing at the moment, Gorbachev thought, was to secure this process of agreement, to keep it from “going off the rails,” as he said.

He saw that the forces resisting *perestroika* took into account that the country approached the point of no return, which is why they decided to undertake this venture. These forces had long made themselves felt at the CC CPSU Plenums, the USSR People’s Deputies congresses, and at the Supreme Soviet. They had been asking for an emergency situation at meetings and in print for a long time.

Gorbachev continued relating the details of how he rebutted the unwelcome guests. “‘Well,’ I said, ‘In the article I consider the course you are pursuing now—the emergency situation. I thought through everything. I am convinced that this is a disastrous path; it could turn into a bloody path... And it would lead not just to nowhere; it would lead right back to pre-*perestroika* times.’ With that they left.”

Everybody wanted to know what would happen next.

M.S.: “Tomorrow they are supposed to disclose their plan. How will they explain ‘my situation’?”

We talked about the people who came. I did not fail to throw in: “These are all ‘your’ people, M.S., you nurtured them, raised them, trusted them... Take even Boldin.” “Well, Plekhanov,” M.S. said, stepping around Boldin, “it goes without question, he is not a good person! Is he thinking about his motherland when he betrays me?! No, about his own skin!”

M.S. started to think aloud about the other “members” of this operation: the visitors named some members of the State Emergency Committee to him. He could not reconcile with the fact that Yazov was among them. He did not want to believe it: “Maybe they wrote in his name, without asking him?” I shared his doubts of the old marshal’s involvement. But with regard to Kryuchkov, I “assuaged” his hesitations: “He is quite capable of something like this... Plus, it would be unthinkable to contrive such a plan without the KGB chairman’s involvement, not to mention acting upon it!”

“What about Yanaev?” M.S. was outraged. “Two hours before these guys’ arrival I talked with him on the phone. He went all out, telling me how they are waiting for me in Moscow, how he will come to meet me in Vnukovo tomorrow!”

We walked around like for this about 15 more minutes.

In the article, Gorbachev examines in detail what the outcomes of each course of action would be. Since society had changed and “the people grew used to the air of freedom” (he has that expression in there), people would never agree to turn back, and they would never agree to a dictatorial regime. Perhaps they could achieve some success in certain areas—after all, the people are at the breaking point and there are some sentiments along the lines of—to hell with it, with the dictatorship, with the junta, let it be anyone, as long as there is immediate relief from the daily troubles and improvement in life. The Russian people have a tendency to look for a savior in the supreme power that would come, bring justice and improve everything. These sentiments are dangerous. And yet, the people as a whole, the country would not want to go back and lose the atmosphere of freedom created by *perestroika*. This was M.S.’ reasoning.

That is why a state of emergency, in his estimation, would be a step towards civil war with countless victims across the country. After all, there were some democratic institutions already in place, and they would rise up against the dictatorship. But the most important factor would be the spontaneous resistance of many thousands of people.

In a draft of the article, Gorbachev described some of the powers that would be likely to act according to the “emergency scenario,” naming Party structures that carry a great reactionary charge—the military-industrial complex, which is heavily tied to the old regime and wants to regain its former status and privileges. He referred to other reactionary categories of society. Specific names were not named, of course. [Author’s note]

I got back to my room, and started worrying about Tamara. She was over in “Yuzhnyi”... in a panic, probably running between Primakov and Shakhnazarov, Shakhnazarov and Krasin,⁶ begging them to find out at least something.

The next day I asked Generalov to come to my office. He showed up, though I did not expect him to. I told him it is wrong to torture a woman like this, and asked him to help her get a ticket to Moscow. He replied that it is impossible to get a ticket right now (? – impossible for him!) But after some thought, he suddenly asked:

- How ready is she to leave?
- How should I know? Why?
- A military plane is going to Moscow today. It is taking some communications equipment and signalers, and one sick man from the security guards.⁷
- Take Tamara with you then!
- Alright. I will send a car for her right now.
- Tell her to pack my suitcase as well and have it delivered here. I don’t even have anything to shave with here...

I got my suitcase late at night. The next day I found out that Tamara got a seat on that plane.

What was the level of our isolation in “Zarya”? This was a question I got often from journalists and friends after we got back to Moscow.

The people Generalov brought, “his” men, were not very many. Some of them he put by the garages, which contained the presidential cars with autonomous communication systems. Some men were stationed by the gates, and they also had guns. The border towers on the beach were already there—at both ends of the semicircle of the dacha’s territory. Border guards were on duty there. But two or three days before the coup, their numbers increased along the highway. Only later, Olga and I recalled that we did not attach any importance to it at the time. Also, people in unusual uniforms appeared along the highway—in sailor’s striped vests, with trousers worn over high boots, and wearing shoes instead of boots. They looked like the riot police. Later we figured out what this meant. It was enough to step out from our office and look at the edge of the cliffs along the Sevastopol-Yalta road to see that border guards stood every 50-100 meters along the road, some of them had dogs.

We were closely monitored. Below are some episodes to prove this.

⁶ Yu.A. Krasin was the Head of the former Institute of Social Sciences, we’ve known each other for a long time. He was vacationing in “Yuzhnyi.” [Author’s note]

⁷ I guessed immediately what “communications” he was talking about. Generalov had said too much. He was talking about what in popular language is called “the nuclear button”... Later this was confirmed. The officers who constantly accompany the famous “suitcase,” were returned to Moscow on Moiseev’s orders, he was the Chief of Defense. [Author’s note]

On the 19th during the day I went to visit Gorbachev. The guard in the booth on the way to the dacha stopped me.

“Who are you?”

“I’m an adviser.”

“Where are you going?”

“It’s easy to guess,” I said, pointing at the presidential dacha.

“It is not allowed.”

I lost my temper and started cursing at him. Suddenly, Oleg (one of the bodyguards) jumped out from behind me and told him: “You—get back in your booth! And never get in his way again (pointing at me). Go ahead, Anatoly Sergeevich.”

I will digress, because this is an important point. This helped to maintain an atmosphere of some minimal reliability. At least the hope that they will not be able to take us with their bare hands. And if they try, it will be costly. “The public” usually looks at the bodyguards with contempt. But these guys proved to be real knights. When their superiors, Plekhanov and Medvedev, betrayed the President, they betrayed these boys, too. But they did not falter. Day and night they changed shifts. They were calm, intense, strong guys, with guns and walkie-talkies, some of them picked up machine guns... They were in all the “vital” points around the dacha, sometimes hidden in the bushes. They were ready to fight to the death: because it is their job and their duty, but more than anything because they are good people and noble in spirit. There were only five of them.

The second episode. On the morning of the 20th, Olya told me, “A.S., why do you sit in your office all the time. Let’s go for a swim. The boys (i.e. the security guards she knows through her husband) are forbidden from going to the water. But it is unlikely that they will stop you, though they won’t let us go without you.”

“Where would we go?”

“Behind the house, where the cafeteria and garages are located, and where most of the guys live, there is a path down to the water. It is steep and rocky; one could slip and fall. But people go there.”

I agreed. Nikolai Fedosievich⁸ brought something on a plate from the cafeteria. I ate. Olya came by with Larisa (nurse) and Tatiana—a big and good woman, she’s a masseuse.

We went. The first guard we passed looked at us suspiciously. He did not stop us, but immediately reported on his walkie-talkie: “Chernyaev is going somewhere.” When we passed by the staff housing, the security guard we are friends with ran over to us, with a ball (there is a sports court nearby). I asked him, “Having fun?” “What else is there to do, A.S.? They won’t let us go anywhere. It’s hot. It’s awful!”

⁸ N.F. Pokutnij, the President’s second personal doctor. [Author’s note]

We made it to the path and to the sharp descent down some makeshift stairs. The descent was around 100 meters. Halfway down, Olga said, "Look behind us!" I turned around and saw that a man was following us. We descended to the beach. In between large boulders there was access to the water and a small open area with three wooden mats. Larisa lay down to sunbathe, the rest of us went into the water—you could break a leg before getting to a spot deep enough to swim. I made a few strokes and then turned on my back. The man who was following us was on the phone. Larisa later told us that he said, "Chernyaev is here. I'm at the post." (The security guards swim on this beach, so there is a telephone in a booth here, for emergencies.)

To the right of us was a border guard tower. Two soldiers fixed their telescopes and binoculars on us. In front of us there was a patrol boat and a speed-boat... they started their engines. About a hundred meters away loomed a frigate.

Why was the security guard necessary then? To catch me, if I try to swim to Turkey? He wouldn't be able to: I swim too well (compared to him, he was a chubby guy). It was clear that they wanted us to know that we have no control, we are being watched everywhere, we are half-prisoners. Psychological pressure.

After 30 minutes, we got out of the water. The security guard turned away. As we went up, we heard him say behind us on the phone: "Chernyaev is going up!"

The girls persuaded me to go swimming again the following day. We went, but I told them: "It is disgusting; I don't really feel like going." Tanya responded: "Same here, I would not go, but I want to annoy those bastards."

It was the same "procedure" as the first time: a different security guard followed us down. Before we had time to take our clothes off, he loudly said over the phone: "The object under observation is here. I am staying..." But this time, an additional border patrol guard with a dog showed up at the top of the path.

As we swam, we could see the dacha's balcony, and Ira and Tolya watching us from there. Below them, closer to the "presidential" beach, there was Generalov and about five more people, all lined up and watching us through binoculars. Later, Generalov "found it necessary" to bring to Olga's attention that he saw how we swam.

After the second day, M.S. told me not to go far from the house, or at least not without his knowledge. What did he mean? Maybe he was only "showing concern"...

At 3 p.m. on August 21st, news on TV: Yeltsin made a statement in the Russian parliament that Gorbachev is in isolation in the Crimea. They made a decision to send Rutskoi, Silaev and other deputies here. Bakatin made a speech. The announcer excitedly gave a detailed account of this speech: This is a coup d'état. At least as of Sunday, Gorbachev was perfectly healthy, save for some sciatica (he must have found out from Primakov). This is lawlessness. We should invite the USSR Supreme Soviet deputies to the Russian parliament; they are currently being heavily influenced.

The parliament held a minute of silence for the people who died during the night "next to the building."

Mikhail Sergeyevich, this is where people are tested: Bakatin, whom you pushed away, fearing all those Lukyanovs and Yanaevs, and the rest!

[Following is a record of] my communication with M.S. during these days.

On the morning of the 19th, as soon as I heard about the emergency situation over “Mayak,” I started thinking how to act toward M.S.—to wait for summons? That is, follow the same chain of command? No, that will not do: he must be convinced of my loyalty. I went to him. I wandered around the house for a long time, until his granddaughter saw me and took me upstairs to her grandfather. He was lying in bed after a routine procedure for his sciatica.

“You know, Anatoly,” he said right away, “when I spoke with them, I did not flinch. I was completely calm. Even now, I am calm. I am certain that I am right. I am certain that this is a gamble, and God forbid there will be blood...”

He was quiet for a while. Then, “They will not be able to restore order, nor to harvest, nor get the economy going... They will not succeed! It is a criminal gamble! Think about what we should do, and come by after lunch.”

I came over as we agreed. We went to the beach with the whole family. It was impossible to talk in the house anymore, because it was bugged everywhere, as Raisa Maksimovna kept constantly warning us in a panic.

A memorable moment: when we were going down to the beach, M.S.’ youngest granddaughter clung to me and took me by the hand, saying, “I have some cards.” She held a deck in her small hands, “This is a king, this is a queen... no, a Jack, and this... oh! I forgot...” (it was a ten). I said, “That’s fine. But what suit is it?” (I did not expect her to know this word).

“It is wormy!”⁹ This child’s mistake struck close to the heart, reminding me of the situation that even this little girl was a part of.

R.M. took M.S. and me into a small pavilion and sent everyone else to the sea. Feverishly, she ripped a couple clean pages from a notebook and handed them to me, then for a long time she searched in her purse for a pen. Finally she found a pencil and gave it to me. “I will leave you,” she said. “Yes, yes,” M.S. said impatiently (which is unusual for him when talking to her), “we have to work.” She smiled pitifully and waved to me.

M.S.: “Tolya! We have to do something. I will pressure this scoundrel,” (he was talking about General Generalov). “I will make demands every day, and I will increase them.”

I: “Yes M.S., I agree. I doubt that the gang in Moscow will react to it, but you cannot let them think that you’ve resigned to this situation.”

M.S.: “Write this down. Firstly, I demand the immediate restoration of government communications. Secondly, I demand an immediate dispatch of the presidential plane, so I can get back to work. If they don’t respond, tomorrow I will insist that they send journalists, both Soviet and foreign.”

⁹ In the Russian, the suit of hearts is called “chervi,” which is literally translated as “worms.” The granddaughter calls the suit “chervivaya”—wormy. [Translator’s note]

I wrote it down. He said, "Watch out that they don't confiscate this from you on the way back!"

"They won't," I said confidently.

On the 20th, I went to see M.S. immediately after the swim I described earlier. Again I walked around the house for a while until the cook told me that he was in the office. He walked out to meet me, and at the same time Raisa Maksimovna did too, from another room. She immediately dragged us to the balcony, pointing to the lamps, the ceiling, the furniture, indicating that they're bugged. We stood for a while, leaning on the railing. I said, "R.M., you see that cliff with the border patrol tower. Beyond it, after a turn is Tesseli (which is a subsidiary of the "Foros" sanatorium, it contains a dacha in which Maxim Gorky lived in the Crimea in the 1930s). Before "Zarya" was built, there was a wild, deserted "beach" here. In reality, it wasn't much of a beach, just some large rocks and it was difficult to get in the water. So... I vacationed in Tesseli several times. And I swam here from that cliff. I would lie here, and then swim back.

R.M. listened absentmindedly. She was startled when I went on, "You probably know that I am a very good swimmer? It would be no problem for me to swim 5 km, and probably even 10 km. Perhaps we should risk it?"

I smiled as I said this. But she became alert. She looked directly at me for a long time, seriously thinking that such an "option" was possible. Before this, she was rapidly whispering to me about how at 3 a.m. they hid in an internal room in the house and took pictures of M.S.' statement with Tolya's camera. "We'll cut it from the film," she said (but she concealed the fact that they made two copies, plus also took pictures of the doctor Igor Anatol'ievich's statement). "So, I will package the film into a small bundle and will give it to you in the evening. But, for God's sake, please do not keep it on you. You could be searched. And don't hide it in your office." M.S. interjected here and suggested to hide it in my swimming trunks. I dry them on the balcony near Olya and Toma's room, where their typewriters and other office supplies are kept.

M.S. was skeptical of the idea that I should swim to Tesseli, Foros, or even "Yuzhnyi": "Even if they don't fish you out of the water, when you come out you'll be practically naked. And then what? They will send you to the nearest police station, and the film will be lost." But they discussed it in earnest, though the idea was clearly absurd. And I suggested it as a joke, to somehow relieve their nervous tension.

R.M. gave me the film later. In the meantime, M.S. asked her to look after the children. We went to a different balcony, stood by the railing and immediately saw how the telescopes from watchtowers turned toward us, and the border patrol on the nearest cliff caught us in his binoculars. At the same time, we heard from the booth below the house: "The object under observation is out on the balcony, second from the left." M.S. and I looked at each other, I laughed and cursed at them... He gave me a look: I had not allowed myself to curse in front of him before. (I regretted it, afraid that he would think that now I can allow myself to do this!)

We sat at a table; he put a notebook in front on him. He offered me to sit across from him, with my back to the sun and in the sun. I said, "Would it be alright if I sat next to you? I don't like the sun, unlike you and Bush... Remember how in Novo-Ogarevo he changed seats to where I had been sitting, when the sun came from around the wall and I moved to sit near you in the shade?"

M.S. smiled, probably remembering the meeting with Bush as an episode of ancient history, though it took place only three weeks ago.

He began to dictate a statement—an address to the nation and the international community. We talked. Discussed and formulated every point. I went back to my office, where Olya typed it on the special thick stationery intended for presidential notes. In the evening I asked him to sign it and add the date and place. At the top he added a note, requesting anyone who finds this statement to make it public through any means possible. When I was leaving, R.M. again gave me strict instructions to hide it well and manage to hold on to it if I am searched on the way. I think these fears are the fruit of nervous strain. Ever since the war, my sense of physical danger has atrophied somewhat.

The day before she gave me her book, “Ya nadeus” [I hope], it was an advance copy that she got on the 17th. She asked me to read it overnight... I did, and praised it highly. Mikhail Sergeyevich was very happy about this, his eyes even watered. I assured them that the book will be in demand all over the world... and at home, as well. “They will not be able to keep it quiet, no matter what happens,” I said confidently. In general, with my entire appearance and behavior I tried to convey to them that things will be alright.

He met me with some kind of heightened hope that I might bring some good news. They asked me what I heard on “Mayak” (I caught a signal through some antediluvian radio we found in Olga and Tamara’s room), what I think about what I heard, and in general what are my thoughts on what will happen tomorrow, the day after, or in a week. In a manner that is usual for me, I answered cheerfully and confidently. The entire time, R.M. was extremely tense; she did not smile even once. Her daughter Ira, on the other hand, was full of determination, fearless, sharp... and ruthless in her words and “epithets” about “what was done to them.” We exchanged words on “abstract” literary themes... which would seem out of place. And her husband Tolya—a surgeon in city hospital No.1—is also smart, confident, a real man, a support.

In any case, I did not bring them any news. All our discussions centered on the consequences of the arrival of Boldin & Co. We discussed the possible reactions of the world community. We guessed what Kohl might be thinking, or Bush. Gorbachev believed unequivocally that there would be no support for the junta. All the credits would be withdrawn in a moment. And our banks would immediately go bankrupt. Without these credits, which were given practically under the security of his name, our light industry would be emaciated. Everything will come to a halt. He called the conspirators mouse brained, because they could not calculate basic things.

We discussed the republics’ possible reactions. Gorbachev believed that the coup members’ actions would lead to a rapid disintegration of the Union. Because the republics could take the following position: you, Russians, are fighting in Moscow, while our business is on the side. We will separate and do our own thing. This is what happened, actually. Some even wanted to support the junta, but only in order to leave Moscow to deal with its own problems.

The Gorbachevs’ mood changed depending on the news from the radio. For example, when some guys from the personal security unit turned on the TV with the help of some wires, we saw Yanaev & Co.’s press conference and heard them say that Gorbachev is gravely ill. This made a terrible impression. Everybody became guarded. The common opinion was that if “those people” allow themselves to utter such wild lies for all the world to hear, that means they’ve

closed off any way back and will go through to the end; they burned all bridges. I told M.S. that Yanaev is looking for an alibi in case “something” happens to Gorbachev. He added: “Now they will make reality fit the lie they told publicly.”

But when the BBC reported on the events around the White House, the Russian parliament, that the people are protesting in defense of Gorbachev, and that Yeltsin took the lead in organizing the resistance, naturally the mood sharply improved. Actually, even on the 19th, before we knew any of this, M.S. told me that Yeltsin will not give in and nothing will break him down. Russia and Moscow will not allow the coup members to emerge victorious. I remembered his words, “I am certain that Boris Nikolayevich will show his character to the full extent.”

Below, I include excerpts from my interview to Sasha Bezymenskaya on Gorbachev’s moods and assumptions from those days. This was the first interview after I got back to Moscow, while the memory was fresh. The interview also reflects my own naiveté about what would happen with Gorbachev, and with all of us.

Sasha asked me: How did Gorbachev feel about Yeltsin coming to his defense?

“That is simply not how the question stood,” I responded. “We were talking about the fate of the State, the fate of the country. There could be no personal accounts here. If a person is ready to do whatever it takes to fight for democracy, for the rule of law, and to save everything that Gorbachev did over the course of six years, then “extraneous” motives do not mean anything. I think you are asking a question that could not have arisen in Gorbachev’s mind.”

“Gorbachev was sure that Yeltsin...” the journalist insisted.

“He was absolutely sure that Yeltsin would not back down.”

“Did he really feel from the very beginning that in these five years people have changed, and that they would not swallow or accept the junta? Was there confidence about this?”

“I spoke with him for the first time when Boldin & Co. had just left. Both then and in the morning, Gorbachev reasoned completely calmly. He said that the worst thing that could happen is if the coup d’état would gain momentum and receive support from some people. Then there would be a civil war with major losses—the thing that Gorbachev has been trying to avoid all these years. When the conspirators abolished glasnost, when they silenced the newspapers, he understood that on the international arena, the junta would lose. By the way, he never doubted the position of the world community. That was clear from the very beginning.

We got our bits of information from the small Sony radio transistor¹⁰ that Tolya had on him. We sat in a circle: M.S. and I on the couch, Tolya squatting, Ira sitting right on the floor, and Raisa Maksimovna across from us on a chair. With our heads close together, we tried to make out the voices. The transistor was very bad and the batteries nearly dead. Tolya moved it around

¹⁰ Afterwards, in Moscow, I was asked more than once how it happened that at this entire magnificent presidential dacha, there was nothing better than this “matchbox”?! That’s just it—there was nothing else! Because all the electronic equipment installed in the rooms was turned off the moment the “gang of four” arrived. The same went for the TV antenna, which serviced the entire “prison camp.” [Author’s note]

to try to catch a signal. This is where I heard the BBC. It is also where I found out that Tamara Alekseyevna was taken away, but it was not clear where.

R.M. carried a small silk purse on her the entire time. It must have contained the most private things that would be confiscated after all the others. She was very afraid of a humiliating search. She was afraid for M.S., who would be shaken to the core by this. The entire time, R.M. was in a state of nervous tension. In this condition, she gave me the bundle with film, wrapped in paper and taped with scotch tape.

“We’ve given similar [bundles] to others. I better not tell you whom, though. This one is for you. Well, no, not for you...”

“Why not me? I keep pushing for my rights as a people’s deputy, that I want to be present at the Supreme Soviet session on the 26th, that Lukyanov announced.”

M.S.: “Is that so?!”

I: “Of course. But even these cretins will know that I, as a witness of your terminal illness and incapacity, cannot be allowed to take the podium...”

R.M.: “Anatoly Sergeyevich! This should be delivered through Olya. She has a child, her parents are sick, you said... Would she agree? This is very dangerous...”

I: “She will agree. She is a desperate woman and hates these people, all the more so because they separated her from her beloved Vasya...”

R.M.: “But you should warn her very thoroughly. Let her hide it... in some intimate spot—maybe her bra or panties. And right now, when you go to your lodgings, where are you going to keep the film? Don’t put it in your pocket, carry it in your hand and hide it. But not in the safe. Somewhere in the hallway, under the rug.”

I put it in my pocket, and only told Olga about it in the evening. She was sitting in an armchair, subdued. “Mayak” was playing classical music, enough to drive you mad! But silence was even worse. I turned it on only to hear the news, though often the news was about sports of cultural events. Yesterday, there was one piece about the Bolivian President’s wife’s visit to Peru, where she did either charity work, or attended a festival... The pinnacle of idiocy! At the moment I thought, or rather keenly felt, that the gang is returning us to an information environment of the worst stagnation years.

Four thirty p.m. Again breaking news. The “Mayak” broadcast started with the announcer’s anxious voice: “We, the employees of TV and Radio, refuse to carry out orders and submit to the so-called Committee on the State of Emergency. We have been deprived of the opportunity to report objective and complete information, and we demand that the totally discredited leadership of TV and Radio be removed from their posts. If we manage to go on air again, we will honestly fulfill our professional duties.”

Bakatin and Primakov (good job Zhenya, he made it to Moscow!) as members of the Security Council, declared that the State Emergency Committee is illegal and unconstitutional. And all its decrees are as well. Gorbachev is healthy and being held against his will. It is necessary to immediately ensure his return to Moscow or give him an opportunity to meet with the press.

Nishanov and Laptev—chairmen of Supreme Soviet Chambers—held an emergency meeting of the Committees. Lukyanov flew to the Crimea to meet with Gorbachev. And the best thing: the Ministry of Defense, upon analyzing the situation resulting from the introduction of the state of emergency in some areas, decided to immediately withdraw troops from those areas (i.e. not just the armored vehicles, but troops as a whole, meaning the paratroopers and all the others).

Who is left with Yanaev, Pugo and their General Kalinin, the commander of Moscow, to face the people?!

At 6 p.m., the “Orbita” channel announced that it will broadcast the full session of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet!

It was around 11 p.m. on August 20th when I turned on the TV at full volume and took a seat near Olga... by her knees.

“Olya! A serious matter has come up. Are you ready to hear me out? But it is very serious. You can say no right now, before I say anything.”

“What are you talking about, Anatoly Sergeevich! As if you don’t know me. Please speak.”

I told her about the film and Gorbachev’s statement, which she herself typed up, and about the plan to get them “to freedom.”

“Alright,” she said, “let’s suppose I get to Moscow. What’s the next step? I will probably be followed.”

“Yes, of course. We discussed this with M.S and R.M. We decided that it would be quite natural if you visit my wife. I will write her a letter... the kind people probably write from prison: everything is alright, don’t worry, I’ll be back soon, the circumstances... etc. Just in case they search you on the plane, or at the airport. You will have to hide the bundle with the film in some truly “private” place. The next step, if you manage to get it to Moscow, is to go to Vesnina Street to my apartment. Give my wife the letter and the bundle. Tell her to call Lena—Bovin’s wife. They know each other. She will come. Just her, not Bovin, he is too notable of a figure, plus he is under suspicion after the question he asked at Yanaev & Co.’s press-conference. My wife will give this thing to Lena, who will give it to Sasha [Bovin]. And he will immediately know what to do with it.”

Olga put the bundle in her jeans after all. There, the bundle constantly protruded. I chuckled at it sometimes, pointing my finger at the place...¹¹

Now it was my job to get Generalov to let her go to Moscow. I started pressuring him beforehand, on the 19th: is he not ashamed of himself, he—an officer—allowing such mockery of a young mother. She has a sick little son. Her parents don’t know what happened to her. We will not be sitting here forever, I tried to scare him. He will have to answer for such behavior

¹¹ She ended up bringing the bundle to Moscow in this manner, when we all “escaped” together. She gave it back to me, and I to Gorbachev, who demonstrated it at the press-conference. [Author’s note]

towards a woman, who is worried sick because she cannot find out about her son. And more of the same.

But he kept repeating: he only has one-way communication with Moscow, they can call him, and his superiors have called. But he cannot call Moscow. He lied, of course.

After discussing the “plan” with Olga, I decided to pressure him once again. By the way, my earlier attempts to push for my rights by pointing out that I’m a USSR People’s Deputy and he, Generalov, is breaking the Constitution and violating my parliamentary immunity by holding me de facto under house arrest, were futile. I invited him again. And again he dared to come. I began to shame him about Olga. But he... outwitted me. He offered to take her to Mukhalatka, which is a government communications point about 20 kilometers from “Zarya” in the direction of Yalta, so she could call home to Moscow.

The following thing happened. A little while after Generalov offered this “option,” which undermined all our plans to transfer information about Gorbachev, the driver “Volodya” came to my office. I put his name in quotation marks because it is difficult to say what his name really is, he is from the KGB. But it’s the same guy who drove Olga, Tamara and me between “Zarya” and “Yuzhnyi” two-three times a day until August 18th.

He did not say hello. “Where is Lanina? I was told to drive her to the telephone.” I got up, offered my hand to him... He hesitated and listlessly shook my hand. I noticed a change in him even when he was sent for my suitcase. For him, I was already a criminal, a prisoner. When Olga got back she had the same impression. She said that in the car, he moved away from her as if she was a leper. Another KGB agent accompanied her—a communications guy. He sat opposite from her when she was on the phone with Moscow, ready to disconnect her any second if she said too much. “I started crying,” she said, “my brother was yelling into the phone—are you alright? And I was crying, chocking on my tears. Overall it was just distressing. They did not let me call your wife.” (I had asked her to call).

In general, they let us know once again who we were to them.

It is worthwhile to note that the State Emergency Committee member Lukyanov, when he emerged from the “Matrosskaya Tishina” detention facility, said in one of his numerous television interviews that “it was all Gorbachev’s lies that they were isolated and had no communication lines. Two feet away from Chernyaev’s office, in the next room there was a telephone from which he could have called anywhere he wanted.” If this was the case, then why did they have to drive Olga over 20 kilometers to make a call, with security, and forbid her even from saying two words to my wife?!

By the way, about our isolation. When Olga returned, I asked her about what she saw on the way. “The road is blocked off to all traffic,” she replied. “There are no cars except military vehicles. Border patrols are at every step. From above (the road is about 20-25 meters above the “Zarya” territory) you can see better that there are not two frigates in the harbor as there were before the 18th, I counted at least 16 various ships. In the haze it was hard to tell, maybe there were more.”

This is how our imprisonment ended.

Around 5 p.m. on the 21st, all three women burst into my office: Olga, Larisa and Tatyana, extremely excited. "Anatoly Sergeevich, look, look what's happening!" We rushed out on the balcony... Several cars were coming from the ramps at the entrance of the dacha's territory. Two boys from security came out to meet them, with Kalashnikovs at the ready. "Stop!" they called out. The cars stopped. "Stop!" more security guys came out from the bushes. A driver and somebody else came out from the first car... They said something. The security's response was "Don't move!" and one of the guys ran toward Gorbachev's dacha. Soon he returned, and the cars moved to the left, behind the service building where my office is located.

I stepped out from my office, which is on the second floor. There is a stairway that goes directly from my door to the main entrance to the house. I was standing there in a rumpled undershirt and worn-out sports pants. A thought flashed through my mind—I look like an inmate in a prison camp!

Lukyanov, Ivashko, Baklanov, Yazov, Kryuchkov filed into the door downstairs. They looked beaten, their faces gloomy. Each one bowed to me!! I understood what was going on—they came to plead guilty. I stood there, stony faced, boiling over with anger. Even before they disappeared in the room on the left, I turned around and showed my back to them. Olga was standing next to me, all red, devilish triumph playing in her eyes.

Larisa and big Tatyana ran into the office. Tatyana is usually so dignified, strong and calm—suddenly she wrapped her arms around me and started sobbing. Then there was nervous laughter, various unmemorable exclamations... In a word, it was a feeling that our imprisonment was over. The scam failed with their schemes.

I got dressed and ran over to M.S. I have to admit, I was afraid that he would receive them... Which must not be done, because we saw on TV that a delegation from the Russian parliament was on their way here. Gorbachev was sitting in his office and giving orders over the phone. He paused for a second to tell me: "I gave them an ultimatum: if they don't connect the phone lines, I will not speak with them. And now I won't speak with them anyway."

While I was present he ordered the commandant of the Kremlin to take the entire Kremlin under his protection and not to allow any of the coup-members in under any circumstances. He got the commander of the Kremlin regiment on the phone, and ordered him to follow orders only from the commandant of the Kremlin. Then he summoned the chief of government communications and the Minister of Communications to the phone, and ordered them to turn off all the coup-members' communications. Judging by their reaction, they were standing at attention on the other end of the line. I pointed out that the cars that brought the State Emergency Committee members had autonomous communications... He summoned Boris (one of the bodyguards) and ordered him to "disconnect the passengers" from the cars.

Then he spoke with George Bush. It was a joyful conversation. M.S. thanked him for his support and solidarity. Bush welcomed Gorbachev's release and return to work...

M.S. also had a conversation with V.I. Shcherbakov (First Deputy Premier) and somebody else... I didn't understand who. The gist of the conversation was—I'll come and we'll figure it out. Before I came in he spoke with Yeltsin, Nazarbayev, and Kravchuk. He told me about this.

He dispelled my fears immediately: “What are you talking about! How could you think something like that. I had no intention of receiving them. I might only speak with Lukyanov and Ivashko.”

Boris reported that the Russian delegation entered the territory of the dacha.

“Invite them in,” M.S. said, “let them go to the cafeteria.” A couple minutes later we joined them there. The scene that followed I will remember for the rest of my life. Silaev and Rutskoï rushed to embrace Gorbachev. There were exclamations and some big words. They interrupted each other in a rush. Bakatin and Primakov, the deputies, were there as well. I looked at them. Some of them had railed against Gorbachev in the parliament and in the press more than once; they had argued with him, and indignantly protested against him. But now, the misfortune instantly brought to light that they are a part of a whole, and that the country needs exactly this whole. I even said, while watching this collective joy and embraces, “Thus finally the Center and Russia have united, without any Union Treaty...” [Here and below I reproduce my diary entries made immediately after arriving in Moscow].

We sat down at a table. We vied with each other in telling what’s been happening in Moscow and here. It turned out—for some reason I was surprised by this—that they did not even know who came to the President with an ultimatum, or what kind of an ultimatum it was.

Silaev and Rutskoï were against Gorbachev receiving Kryuchkov & Co., who were in essence sitting under guard in the service house below my office. M.S. replied that he will most likely receive only Lukyanov and Ivashko, who seem to have come separately.

It was a long conversation. It was already nearing 10 p.m. when Rutskoï took initiative. He is a strong and handsome man; it’s a pleasure to observe him. “Mikhail Sergeyeovich,” he said, “it is time to discuss what the next step will be. We will not let you go on the (presidential) airplane on which those types (!) got here. We shall take my airplane. It is at the same airport, but far from yours. It is securely guarded. I brought 40 lieutenant-colonels with me, they are all armed. We’ll make it.

I should say a word about these lieutenant-colonels. According to Rutskoï’s plan, M.S. was supposed to make a false exit from his car near the presidential plane. He did this, and then quickly got back in the car, which rushed toward Rutskoï’s plane, standing 3-5 km away. When M.S., in his wool sweater that people saw on TV when he appeared at Vnukovo, came toward Rutskoï’s plane, these officers stood with guns in the open until he was inside the plane. Looking at this scene, I thought: there is still genuine officer’s honor in our army. There is a high intelligence in the army, too. One only has to talk to someone like Colonel N.S. Stolyarov, who came with the group of deputies to rescue his President. We drove to the airport in one car.

Then there was the flight. Rutskoï was in charge of the flight, he kept summoning the pilots [to discuss the details]. M.S. and his family settled in a small bay of the plane, and called me over. There was so little space that the little granddaughters lay down on the floor and quickly fell asleep.

When I came in, he cheerfully asked me, “So, who are you now?” I replied, “I am a simple Soviet prisoner, but an ex-prisoner.” Everybody laughed excitedly. Silaev, Rutskoï, Primakov and Bakatin came over, the doctor Igor’ Anatol’evich Borisov was also there. R.M. was telling us what happened to her when they heard that the coup-members are coming over to

ascertain the condition of Mikhail Sergeyevich's health... now she was feeling better, but still had poor command of her arm. There was an animated conversation about people, and how they are tested in such circumstances, about immorality, which is the source of all crimes and misfortunes. There were toasts to continuing life... For the first time then, M.S. said the words: "We are flying to a new country."

Many magazines printed the photograph of Ira coming down the ladder from the airplane (in Vnukovo airport), carrying her daughter wrapped in a blanket. She walked past the crowd surrounding the President. I noticed there were people who were sincerely happy to see him, as well as those for whom it would have been better if things worked out "otherwise." So, Ira took her daughter to the car, near which I was standing, away from the people crowding around M.S. She lunged for the car seat and started shaking with sobs. I leaned over and tried to say something. Her husband was near her, hugging her and stroking her hair, trying to calm her, but it was no use. This final episode at the airport came to symbolize for me the tragedy that happened not only at the dacha in the Crimea, but with the whole country. Irina, a young Russian woman, who was totally energetic, composed, and ready for anything in the face of danger, broke down in tears of joy and despair when "it" was over. It was a release. But then... everyday life resumes and you have to do your job. Alas! Things did not go as we had hoped at the time.