

January 17, 1991

The war in the Persian Gulf has started (ground campaign). I had no doubt that it would. They woke me up at 4 a.m., went to the Kremlin. Stopped by Primakov's, Dzasokhov and Falin were there. We started working on Gorbachev's statement.

Around 7 a.m. in the Walnut Room M.S. called together—my jaw dropped when I walked in—members of the Politburo, CC Secretaries... "We have come full circle," I thought. This is a symptom. Of course, Yazov was there too, he spread a map on the table and showed what he thought would happen (by the way, he guessed correctly).

If only the Americans knew... It is nighttime, an emergency situation. The gathered group consists of amateurs in the issue at hand. The President's rooms have neither a fax, nor any direct line to the information service. We waited for the stenographer for half an hour. It took over an hour to re-type a two-page statement with corrections. Gorbachev asked Yazov, "When did you 'see' it?" (Meaning when did he learn from the military and technical intelligence about the start of American attacks). "I did not see it, I heard it. About an hour after it started. We intercepted an exchange between a B-52 and Milwaukee (aircraft carrier)."

That's the company M.S. had when he decided the question related to an event, the consequences of which could surpass the results of World War II in terms of state conflicts, factors, and the regrouping of all the world powers.

I am not sure whether Ignatenko was lying or telling the truth when he said that he was sitting next to one of the CC secretaries and when ships were mentioned in the course of the conversation, he leaned over and asked, "What have ships got to do with it? Is it close to the sea?"

By the way, Boldin was the one who called people and sent cars out to the dachas. But he did not call or notify me. It was Primakov who called and said that we are all meeting. This is curious. After all, I am the President's adviser on international relations and everybody knows that I am involved in this issue.

After Gorbachev let people go around 9 a.m., he suddenly beckoned me into his office. He talked about Lithuania. I understood that he got wind of my backroom conversations and intentions. Meanwhile, *Moskovskie Novosti* fired off: "bloody Sunday" and a list of accusations at Gorbachev, signed by around 30 politicians—from Abuladze to Karyakin, from Bovin to Gelman, almost all Gorbachev's former favorites. It made an impression on him. The day before, when he was presenting Bessmertnykh at the MFA, he referred to the article, saying: "They are already calling me a criminal and a murderer."

I thought it was a filthy thing of them to do. This publication plus the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf have cooled my desire to give him my resignation letter, which Tamara locked in her safe and guards carefully. Gorbachev talked, seemingly regretful that things were turning out this way. Such a confrontation, such a split, such hostility in society, it is as if the walls have started marching against each other. I told him, "So let

them fight each other, even until death. But why tanks? It is the ruin of your cause. Is Lithuania worth such stakes?” “You do not understand,” Gorbachev said. “It is the army. I could not openly disassociate myself from them and condemn them after the Lithuanians humiliated them and their families in the garrisons.”

Precisely, I thought. This only confirms the analysis of the situation coming from all sides: M.S. has fallen into the embrace of “Petrushchenkovs” against his own will and found himself without a base. Now he is forced to follow the logic of protecting power at all costs. He does not feel the danger. But the strike is coming tomorrow and on Sunday there will be a demonstration in Moscow under the slogan “Gorbachev must resign.” But why he called me over: to work with me, in light of the fact that Petrakov and Shatalin not only resigned, but signed that very article in *Moskovskie Novosti* where he is called a murderer. Does he want Chernyaev to leave too, the “most loyal” one?

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Gorbachev had three telephone conversations:

- With Mitterrand. The latter called. No substance. It seems he just wanted to show himself next to Gorbachev in being distanced from Bush’s direct and uncompromising position on the Persian Gulf.
- With Kohl. M.S. called him. Congratulated him on his election as Chancellor of United Germany. They are on familiar terms with each other: Misha, Helmut. The same declarations of love and faithfulness. Kohl assured M.S. that he does not believe that Gorbachev turned away from *perestroika* and moved into the right-wing camp because of Lithuania. He assured M.S. that everything will remain as they agreed at their meetings in Arkhyz, Moscow, and Bonn.
- The conversation with Bush started out coldly. M.S. did not consider it necessary to praise him for taking on the war upon himself—for everybody. He did not express his condolences for the boys who already died. He immediately started on his two-phase theory: there is already victory in the first phase (Hussein is politically discredited, his military potential is undermined, the risk of hegemony in the region is removed—so why should we keep killing others and put our boys on the line?)

He laid out his plan: a pause in hostilities under the condition that Hussein declares that he will withdraw from Kuwait. A promise to negotiate on all issues after the withdrawal.

Bush did not agree. This was followed by a dropped call for “technical reasons.” In reality, Bush probably needed to consult with his team. After the line was reconnected, he said he did not believe that Hussein would accept such a plan. I noticed that Gorbachev’s attitude was: if that’s what you want—okay, go ahead, later you can tell us how it went.

This morning I made a scene to Gorbachev in the presence of Bessmertnykh, Pavlov, Primakov, Ignatenko: “Again Boldin did not notify me that people are gathering in the Walnut Room to discuss the war in the Persian Gulf. I am not needed in

international affairs? My opinion is of no interest in this important matter?” Gorbachev started to apologize, trying to turn it into a joke. He cursed Boldin, but at the same time justified him by saying that advisers should attend such events automatically and do not need separate invitations. “See,” he said, “everyone suspects me. But if Chernyaev started to suspect me, then the matter has gone really deep in our society.” This was said against the background of the abovementioned action by 30 members of the intelligentsia in *Moskovskie Novosti*, and then 116 more members of the intelligentsia, including some close to Gorbachev, in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*. Then there was another group in *Komsomolka* [*Komsomol'skaya Pravda*]. And another collective statement in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* that praised Yeltsin: he supposedly saved the honor of the Russian people, in contrast to Gorbachev, who disgraced Russian people. Add to that Petrakov's resignation and the grumbling and resignation threats from Yakovlev, Primakov's statement, Shatalin's endless interviews in newspapers where he rails against Gorbachev, and Vitaliy Ignatenko's talks with him (Gorbachev). Against this background, Chernyaev seems to be the last redoubt; everyone is leaving and betraying him. He felt that I was on the brink. Though, I repeat, I remain by his side because of the Persian Gulf War. By the way, he threw out this joke: in some Canadian newspaper, some Canadian millionaire, whom M.S. never met, is inviting him over, promising him a country house and a lifetime pension. He jokes: “Maybe we should go? We'll write memoirs together.”

Yesterday, *Kuranty* published an excerpt from Ligachev's book, about how he made Gorbachev General Secretary. The book is called *The Birth and Demise of Perestroika*. The author is glad that finally, after Lithuania, *perestroika* is returning to its proper course, i.e. the one always indicated by Yegor Kuzmich.

January 29, 1991

I put the following passage in the letter to Andreotti: “To the person who best understands us and can stop the disintegration of good relations with the Soviet Union, save the European process and prepare all of us to build peace after the Persian Gulf War.” M.S. corrected the text heavily, removing the most “heartfelt” parts.

Bessmertnykh convinced Bush and Baker to stop the Lithuania-related economic reprisals. The Americans still need us—to finish off Hussein.

Kryuchkov brought Gorbachev another batch of bogus information that the U.S. is about to strike Hussein with nuclear weapons. Tolya Kovalyov, following Kryuchkov's lead, immediately composed a statement from the USSR MFA in protest. I asked to see it... then attached a biting note to it and sent it to Gorbachev. He returned it to me with the resolution, “Hold until special circumstances.” What nitwits we have in our departments! They simply cannot tell apart big-time politics from tactical propaganda games.

[Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]