

Excerpts from Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary, 1990

August 21: Meanwhile, the crisis in Iraq was developing. I was afraid that M.S. would be hesitant to sharply condemn Hussein. Luckily, I was wrong. Plus, Shevardnadze was acting resolutely in the spirit of New Thinking. He coordinated everything with Gorbachev over the phone though, starting with the agreement to meet with Baker in Moscow and issue a joint statement. Sometimes, if he called at night, I would not disturb Gorbachev and take the responsibility on myself, assuring Eduard Amvrosievich that Gorbachev would support the decision.

August 27: Today Meguid was here—Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs. M.S. incorporated a "Soviet-Egyptian" factor with a nuance, an accent on the Arabs. It is good that he is restoring relations with Egypt in time, essentially giving them preference in the Arab world, despite Assad's pretensions. Overall, so far we are in a "white jabot" over there. And we are maintaining New Thinking. But if Hussein does not back down, it will be a nightmare.

September 2: M.S. asked me to work out (for the meeting with Bush) three possible outcomes for the Persian Gulf.

- Blockade (how long will Hussein be able to hold out, will it yield results);
- A military solution (outcomes for both sides and for us);
- Compromise (what kind?)

He assigned me to ask Mitterrand and Mubarak what they would "advise." Also, send a message to Hussein: can he say anything new in relation to the Bush-Gorbachev meeting?

While Shevardnadze is travelling to China and Japan, Kovalev has been "coordinating" every line with me, including who is going to be present at the breakfast in Helsinki: this is really not my "profession"!

What is going to happen with Ryzhkov? With the economic program? With the Union? I think by New Years we are no longer going to have a country. Will we have Gorbachev? Probably yes.

September 4: At a breakneck pace I have been preparing materials for M.S.' meeting with American senators, with Aziz (from Hussein), and doing some major work on the "five blocks" for Helsinki with Bush. Brutents gave me an acceptable block. The materials from the MFA are cheap and bureaucratic texts.

September 13: On the evening of September 9th [sic] we flew to Helsinki with M.S. There was a conversation with Koivisto at the Presidential Palace. Lunch of two presidential couples and Kalela and I (he is Koivisto's Chief Clerk). M.S. became very open as if he were with a bosom (Soviet) friend, talking about the market, the soul, the fate of a statesman, the fact that he has "accomplished his mission" and can leave. In a word, there was a completely informal atmosphere.

At night M.S. gathered his compatriots-in-arms for a brainstorming session before the meeting with Bush. We stayed up until 3a.m. Shevardnadze did not say much. Primakov was pushing to consider the Arabs. Falin kept returning to the "class line," referring to a conference of Europe's "left" in Tampere. I was calling for "Realpolitik"—America has to be given preference over the Arabs. This is our salvation and our future. To my surprise, at the meeting with Bush, 95 percent of the time M.S. took my direction and left 5 percent for the Arabs. This has an effect, because the Americans do not trust us completely.

I stayed up practically until morning, making a conversation diagram based on the discussion. In the morning we were walking from the hotel to the Embassy, hearing tipsy Finnish couples saying "Hello!"... (Actually, one could have a special discussion about this—friendly, happy, calm, well-fed, self-confident people).

On the 10th [sic] in the morning, M.S.—Bush + Scowcroft and I. M.S. dominated. Bush really wanted support, he was nervous that Gorbachev would fall through, after all the Persian Gulf and Hussein have put Bush' presidency on the line. But M.S. gave him the maximum: even unexpectedly, without waiting for Bush' suggestion, he said that the Sabah family (Kuwait's rulers) should be reinstated. He almost convinced [Bush] of the necessity to connect dealing with Hussein with the Palestinian question.

Then we had lunch. Afterwards there was a meeting of the delegations, to which I was late because I was composing the background for the press-conference. The press-conference itself was quite an event! M.S. was confident and very good. In a word, he showed the world that he is the leader of a power, a great power, despite the chaos at home. And the whole world believed in him once again.

But to our people, it's like water off a duck's back. Even this they did not appreciate. They did not notice history being made in Helsinki.

September 14: Yesterday 22 American businessmen visited Gorbachev. M.S. charmed them, but they are business people and through Matlock's lips persistently tried to find out: with whom do you do business here? Herein lies the main problem of Soviet business.

Stopping the conversation midway through, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Baker, Ross, and I went to the adjoining room. As if continuing the enthusiasm of his businessmen, Baker said openly to Gorbachev that in his entire political career he had not met a more courageous, bold, and great leader, who dared to turn the country around, overturning 70 years of its history. "Until last year," Baker went on, "I was hesitant and cautious. But today Bush and I are wholly behind you. We sincerely wish you success."

The conversation, as they say, went arm-in-arm. M.S. called him Jim. However, he did not promise transport aircraft to transfer Syrian troops to Saudi Arabia (later, when Shevardnadze asked him about it he replied: we don't need to get involved!).

He asked Baker for a non-binding loan of billion to a billion and a half dollars with repayment in five years. Baker personally would have agreed, but he said the law does not allow it. If they were to go to Congress with, "you'd be able to finish two *perestroikas* in that amount of time."

By the way, in relation to such closeness between Gorbachev and the Secretary of State, I remembered Helsinki. The one-on-one talk with Bush was finished, but Bush was hesitating about something... Then he held out his hand, "Until lunch! See you soon!" and suddenly, "Can I call you by your first name?" (i.e. by the familiar address) M.S. gladly replied and immediately called him George. From this moment on M.S. became Michael.

In the meantime, we both still have weapons capable of destroying each other ten times over. As it turns out, the START talks in Vienna are going badly (this is Baker and Shevardnadze's evaluation, which they gave yesterday in a talk with M.S.). This means Michael and George's Helsinki plan to come to an agreement this year is in jeopardy.

I told Akhromeev about this today. He says, "We cannot do anything. The Americans are refusing to negotiate on marine aviation." That's Mike and George for you! And there is Comrade Moiseev too (Chief of General Staff), who is worse than Akhromeev.

Today Gorbachev met with Hurd (Great Britain's Minister of Foreign Affairs). Before the meeting I armed him with some information I got from Zamyatin (Ambassador in London). He writes that Thatcher is offended, she is jealous of Gorbachev's attention, says that he has lost interest. He is always with Kohl or Mitterrand, while she deserves to be treated better. M.S. tried to "compensate" and in the conversation with Hurd he flowed with praise for Margaret and even offered to make an agreement similar to the one with Germany and France. In the evening Gorbachev met with two Israeli ministers (finances and energy).

We are counting on getting 10 billion... Well, well! In any case this meeting is a sensation with enormous consequences. Especially in the context of the Persian Gulf War.

By the way, Gorbachev notified Baker yesterday that he will meet with the Israelis. Baker, laughing and shaking his finger, exclaimed, “Just don’t ask them for money! Look at the fix Reagan got himself into.” (The fact of the matter is that with Israel as the intermediary, Reagan asked Iran for money, in order to send it to the Nicaraguan Contras). Later, when we were leaving from the Kremlin and Gorbachev put me in the car with him I blurted out, “Then what are these ministers for, anyways?!” He laughed. But I tried to suggest the economist (!) Petrakov for this meeting with the Israelis. He and Yakovlev attended.

September 27: M.S. called last night: “People say that after Helsinki Gorbachev did not do anything for the Persian Gulf crisis...”

“Who says that?”

“The Americans...”

“How is that possible? You meet with various foreign dignitaries practically every day and you confirm the approach you developed at Helsinki... Plus, consider Shevardnadze’s speech, it also demonstrates your policies. Nobody would think that he ‘allowed himself’ to give that speech.”

M.S. calmed down. But where did he get these ideas? Who is feeding them to him? I haven’t seen such information, but he must have a special source.

September 29: Last night at work I finished up M.S.’ greetings for Weizsäcker and Kohl on the occasion of Germany’s unification. Then M.S. met with the intelligentsia. I was devouring telegrams. I wrote him a proposal—something should be done about our specialists working in Iraq. Unlike the Americans and others, we once again do not take care of our own people, and they are beginning to mutiny. We did not evacuate them early and now they are trapped. Hussein is already including them in the “human shield.” I wrote a note about Lafontaine and Bahr’s suggestion to train our officers in civilian professions.

October 14: There was an episode with Primakov’s “packet” for Hussein (after his trip there). Shevardnadze blocked it, he was jealous. It is amazing. I wrote M.S. a note, he wrote a resolution on it (taking out the paragraphs about jealousy and other that would be offensive to Shevardnadze). He ordered E.A. and Primakov to urgently prepare a proposal on Primakov’s trip—Rome-Paris-Washington D.C.... But Primakov later called, Shevardnadze blocked the proposal, “without me, I am not participating in this,

the Americans will not start a war.” By the way, to a great extent Primakov owes his political career to Shevardnadze, it was thanks to him that Gorbachev decided to promote Primakov and not Arbatov.

October 17: Then it was 12p.m., time for his meeting with Cheney (US Defense Secretary). They went into a different room, and it was like a different Gorbachev. Once again in the saddle, the leader of a great power, in control of the situation, who knows exactly what to do, certain of success. He did not let the American even open his mouth.

October 20: Two people from the American embassy came by, brought a letter from Bush to Michael. Bush thanks M.S. for sending Primakov to Bagdad, but insists that we do not give Hussein “premiums and do not let him save face.” On my suggestion, Primakov stopped by London in the course of his travels to meet with Madam (Thatcher), “otherwise it’s all Andreotti, Mitterrand, Bush, while she is left out.”

Upon receiving the letter from Bush, M.S. gave him a call. He caught on that the US President needs Michael! I also caught on... but things are moving towards war.

October 21: Primakov returned from his travels (Rome-Paris-Washington-London). He called me last night: “I felt with my skin that a strike is inevitable. It is a matter of a week.” He asked for help in talking with M.S.—he wants to go to Cairo, Riyadh, and to Hussein to say, “We’ve done everything we can. If you do not concede you have yourself to blame.”

M.S. approved my writings for Madrid. There are still “toasts,” minor points and materials for talks. I asked him to see Santra with Gusenkov (without me), and give the interview to *El País* with Ignatenko. He agreed.

October 31: On the Persian Gulf. No matter how Primakov and Mitterrand may try, Gorbachev is reasonably saying that we cannot separate from the Americans, no matter how much we might want to avoid war. Then everything would come undone. Some of Gorbachev’s expressions at a press conference caused a fuss in Madrid and Paris. They wondered whether Gorbachev might be excluding the possibility of a military solution altogether? I know that he is not. Today, when Arbatov called asking how to react to questions from his acquaintances the Ambassadors of Kuwait, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, I told Yurka: “Let them know that we will never sacrifice our alliance with the United States in this matter.”

Paris (Gorbachev’s “working” meeting regarding the Persian Gulf). In the evening we (M.S., Mitterrand, Vedrin, and I) went straight to the Élysée Palace. Afterwards, everyone went to have dinner with the ladies, and I went to write. After midnight we went for a walk down the Champs-Élysées. Walked for an hour and a half, it was already empty, even though it is Sunday.

At 10a.m. Mitterrand picked up M.S. and we went to Rambouillet. The drive was a pleasure. Again M.S. and Mitterrand one on one, then + Rocard, Shevardnadze and Dumas. Then the signing of a Consent Agreement, then a press-conference, then lunch hosted by the “President of France.” I was seated next to Rocard and started speaking French not only about the visit and the Soviet-French factor, but about Camus and Sartre. He got carried away... then realized it and asked me if I understand. I said about 80 percent. He was satisfied and continued. I could not stop being surprised at myself, how quickly the language came back to me in a French setting.

November 24: On Sunday, November 18th, M.S. was in Italy, accepting the Fiuggi Prize. In the evening he flew straight to Paris. On the same day there was a meeting with Bush. For two hours they talked about Hussein. Bush to M.S., “Michael, help me!”

M.S. was in his style (regarding a “political solution”) but with a clear, thought-out tendency to stay close to Bush in any turn of events. This protestant pair (Bush and Baker) is more reliable even than Kohl, because they are detached... They need very little—for us not thwart at the Security Council their punishment of Hussein, even though they would be glad to avoid military action (Bush spoke plaintively about “his boys” he had just visited on the Rhine and who were immediately sent to the Saudi desert).

Their conversation over lunch, with Shevardnadze, Baker, Yazov, was a conversation between two friends. M.S. did not for a minute object to the Security Council’s new resolution. But he also did not want to use the words “military means.” And Bush did not suggest it, even though all the newspapers wrote about nothing else and later claimed that Bush could not “break M.S.” Nonsense, there were no discrepancies between them.