

Excerpt from Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary.

January 2, 1990.

Glancing at my last diary entry, I realized that there was not a word about M.S.' visit to Italy, nor the Pope, nor Malta.

There is absolutely no time to write and, most importantly, I don't know how to telegraphically summarize (like in Blok's diaries!) the essence of my views on current events (although this method leaves a great deal unexplained).

So: we were in Italy on November 24-30th, then Malta—on the ship “Maxim Gorky” from November 30th to December 2nd.

I am used to such trips and they do not particularly excite me personally. I try to avoid formal events (lunches, banquets), and this time I attended only one—at the Prime Minister's at Capitoline. I found myself in the company of such talkative women at the reception (they spoke French) that with the accompaniment of wine I allowed myself to use my French to have a hearty conversation. A propos!

I lived with M.S. at the “Abimelech,” plus two secretaries. Uncomfortable. As usual, there is a lot of work and commotion, no time to think about the substance and to reflect.

Again and again we saw the people's fantastically sincere sympathy for Gorbachev, at times multiplied by the Italian temperament. This is not just popularity...

The talks and the signed documents don't seem significant: all of this has already been done before with other countries and so far little of it is being turned into action (for us and for them). The heart of the matter is the change of atmosphere in the general political situation.

I felt this most acutely in Milan. It was some kind of mass hysteria. The cars could barely move through the crowds along the streets. When M.S. stepped out on the La Scala square and started walking to the Municipality, something unbelievable was going on... the crowd was a solid mass, which barely parted to let him make a couple steps. Everywhere, in the windows, on the rails, on any protruding surface people were on top of each other. There was a deafening cry of “Gorby! Gorby!” The police was trampled. The security services had a heart attack. Only innate culture prevented people from crushing each other to death.

Later, after M.S.' speech at the Municipality (as he later admitted, he botched the speech because he was in shock and couldn't find the right words) he came out and a group of women broke through to his car. It was clear from their clothes that they were from the high circles of society, the establishment. Completely hysterically, with tears in their eyes, they threw themselves at the car windows, when the guards tore them away they tried to run back, etc.

What is this? In the past we did not know and could not understand to what terror we subjected Europe with our military might, our 1968, our Afghanistan, and the shock the Europeans felt after we installed the SS-20s. We did not want to know this: we were demonstrating socialism's power. And now Gorby removed this terror. The country [USSR] appeared to be normal, even unfortunate.

This is it! This is why now Gorbachev is not only the “man of the year” but also the “man of the decade.” Again and again: with our revolutions we give more to others than to ourselves.

We arrived **at Malta** at night, and again we were met with a pandemonium by the Palace in honor of Gorby’s visit.

About Malta—Gorbachev-Bush. A lot has been written on this “event of the century,” about everything related to it. Arbatov, who hates expenditures on the naval forces, expressed himself in his sarcastically-Jewish manner: I told you that the naval forces are useless, plus the rightness of “Socialist Realism” (this is regarding the fact that we provided the ship “Maxim Gorky.” Initially the plan was to conduct the meetings in turn on the American frigate and our cruiser, but a storm got in the way. We had to conduct the talks on our ship).

Now, getting to the point. Despite the sensational nature of the event, I did not for a second feel aspiration. To me (maybe because I am tired, constantly worried not to forget or miss something) it seemed like a regular, normal affair... M.S. acted like he and Bush were old pals—frank and simple, and openly well-intentioned.

M.S. knows that the negotiations over how many missiles to we cut back on today or tomorrow are not the deciding matter. **The deciding factor is that the USSR and US are no longer enemies. This is the most important thing.** Khrushchev also wanted this, but ideology got in his way. He wanted to win the “war” in favor of socialism and to bury capitalism, without starting a war or spilling a drop of blood.

M.S. does not believe in any ideology. He often says: are we supposed to shoot at each other because we believe in different gods? This is not just a funny metaphor, it is his true conviction.

He knows that nobody will start a war against us. There is no real military threat. We need the army for the superpower prestige, and internally because there is nothing we can do with it right now. It has turned into an organic burden on society. There are more marshals and generals in Moscow than in the rest of the world! This is a political and social problem. It is fine that Arbatov and “Ogonek” are yelping at Yazov and Akhromeev and tearing at their coattails, they’re in a good spot! But what is it like for Gorbachev with this horde and armada!

In a word, Gorbachev played up the symbolism so beloved by people in the West to do away with the “Soviet threat.” Truly, it is unlikely that anybody believes in it anymore, except for the most unenlightened... For in reality it does not exist while there is Gorbachev and *perestroika*.

Both of them (M.S. and Bush) truly looked “good” together—and gave hope to all of humanity.

I did not fly to Moscow with everybody after Malta, but as we agreed beforehand with M.S., I returned to Rome on the invitation of Rubbi-Occhetto and spent the night at our embassy. I spent five days in Italy, walking around the streets and museums, visiting Rubbi and Boffa. More about this later.

About the Pope. “For them” it is another great event, but for us it passed almost without notice. It did not even have an impact on the events in Lvov. However, it takes time to evaluate the consequences of such a meeting. History will be its judge. I was not present during the one-on-one meeting with the

Pope (unlike the meeting with Bush), but read the transcript. They spoke like two good Christians, but modern and politicized.

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