

First uncensored reports from Moscow on Soviet events

Current developments in USSR irrational, Kafkaian

From Vladimir Simonov A Daily Star exclusive

MOSCOW, Aug 21: I am sitting in my office and watching through the window six tanks standing near our information agency. It is strange to see these spotted monsters in Moscow after Gorbachev withdrew them from Afghanistan. This is not the sole trait making current Soviet developments irrational and even Kafkaian. Gorbachev has been removed from his post, but his historic reforms live an independent life and continue decisively influencing the events even in the absence of their author. This is especially noticeable on the international plane. In his address to the heads of state and government and at the subsequent news conference, Vice President Gennady Yanayev repeatedly stressed that the extraordinary measures on no account affect the USSR's international commitments. Gorbachev's influence on world politics has been tremendous and is irreversible. Yanayev could hardly change the state of affairs and reduce to zero the global consequences of Gorbachev's political line. But the Soviet Vice President does not seem to be willing to do anything of the kind. Over the six years of his rule, Gorbachev has transformed relationship between

the two superpowers and switched over from confrontation to cooperation with the West. As a result, mankind has for the first time set control over and started reducing armaments, be it conventional, intermediate-range nuclear, or strategic. The Soviet President did not just sign the documents drawn up by his military and diplomatic experts. He used his political will and gift of persuasion each time the talks were deadlocked because of the sluggishness or direct opposition of the Soviet military industrial complex. In the wake of the talks, experts usually concluded that the military industrial complex had clung to minor details and illusory symbols outdated in the epoch of shuttles and Chernobyl. Victor Komplektov, Soviet Ambassador to the United States, called at the US State Department and handed in a letter reaffirming the Federal State of Emergency Committee's readiness to leave in force all acting international treaties. The committee might have not written such a letter and instructed Komplektov to meet with Robert Gates. Even without special messages it is clear that the commitments signed by the Soviet side under Gorbachev are unshakable agreements of the Helsinki

Pact or Paris Charter type reflect new trends in world politics and the new international order. Trying to change these

realities would mean to oppose oneself to the world community. Indicative in this respect is

the statement made by the UN Secretary General on behalf of Perez de Cuellar who is on a vacation in Portugal. The UN Secretary

General noted, in part, that Gorbachev have in recent years actively supported the international forum and his person-

ally. Yanayev and his associates at the Federal State of Emergency Committee have voluntarily shouldered the vast burden of problems, which was borne by Gorbachev. It is in this light that one should, probably, treat Yanayev's mysterious phrase: "I hope that, after recovering, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev will again fulfil his service duties."

In the given case the Soviet Vice President sang in unison with the sentiments prevailing in the world. People both in the West and in the East would give a sigh of relief if Gorbachev were back again. Vladimir Lukin, Political Observer of the Novosti reports from Moscow: "You democrats are as much to blame for what has happened, as the conservatives," shouted a man at a crowd gathered near the offices of the now suspended liberal-oriented weekly "Moscow News", which for years was the standard-bearer of glasnost and perestroika. "Now you support Mikhail Gorbachev, but where were you before? You thought nothing of unjustly attacking him."

This was the mood of many people clustering in small groups on Pushkin Square and along Tverskaya Street, the city's main thoroughfare leading to the Kremlin. But there were others, representatives of the older generation, who marched down the street holding hands and singing "When Comrade Yezhov will call us to battle", a paraphrase of the words of a World War II marching song with the name of the Soviet Minister of Defense, added. The latter were obviously moving against the tide toward Red Square, while most people were walking in the direction of the Russian Republic's Parliament Building on the Moskva river embankment and the seat of resistance. The divergence of views openly expressed by people in this troubled times in Moscow indicates the great distance that we have been able to transgress toward the democratisation of the Soviet society following the onset of the Gorbachev-led perestroika in 1985. And the evening TV newscast did not show jubilant crowds supportive of the moves taken by the Committee on the State of Emergency. Aside from the official statements there were clips of Republican leaders appealing for calm and of people erecting barricades near the Russian Parliament's building and saying that they intended to stay there for as long as was needed to protect their democratic gains. Though the country is in a very difficult economic situation, it was obviously "not by bread alone" for the people. They are no longer willing to make one person a scapegoat for all of the shortcomings of the past. Neither can they be forced into believing that with the appearance of other personalities in the leadership, who promise to take swift and resolute action in order to "overcome the deep and all-embracing crisis", the state of things will improve as if by a magic wand, especially if these people are not newcomers to the Soviet political scene and have been directly involved in governing the country before. The first hours and the first days of the August crisis indicate that the greatly matured Soviet society is able to make responsible decisions, favouring the good of the people and the country over the interests of one political side or the other — like oil workers of Tyumen who refused to go on strike for fear that this might result in armed civil strife which no one wants, or the coal miners of Donetsk who put their decision to strike on hold pending the development of events. There is every indication that this prevailing popular mood has been brought home to the members of the Emergency Committee and is deterring them from taking rash actions. During their first news conference in Moscow they did their utmost to reassure those present, and the population who later watched them on television, that they are supportive of the reforms instituted by President Gorbachev and that he would appear in public as soon as his health permits. Let us hope that it will be as soon as possible (Novosti).



Shevardnadze joins Yeltsin in Russian parliament

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze joined Russian President Boris Yeltsin and deputies entrenched in the Russian Parliament late Tuesday, and called for coup opponents to take a harder line against the new regime, reports AFP. Shevardnadze was seen entering the Russian Parliament Building, where thousands of people have gathered to back Yeltsin in his challenge to coup leaders who ousted Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. In an interview with French television, he said "We must harden our calls for a general strike and civil disobedience."

"This coup is a hopeless adventure" by people with "principles from the stone age," Shevardnadze told France's TF1 network. Yeltsin has many followers in the army, above all among officers and even generals, of the younger generation of course, he said. But Shevardnadze cautioned that the "situation is still too dramatic for us to be over-confident and over-optimistic." Turning to ousted President Mikhail Gorbachev, Shevardnadze said "I hope that Gorbachev is the victim and not the instigator in this plot, because if he was he would have signed his death sentence, a physical, moral and political death." Shevardnadze resigned as Foreign Minister last December, warning that dictatorship was looming over the Soviet Union. He said it had "obviously been a very big mistake (for Gorbachev) to leave the capital and his post. It was sheer thoughtlessness." Gorbachev was vacationing on the Black Sea when he was ousted early Monday. Shevardnadze said Yeltsin had vainly tried to reach Gorbachev "on a special line."

Perez calls for restraint

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 21: Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar on Tuesday appealed to all leaders in the Soviet Union to exercise restraint so that a peaceful, legal solution to the crisis can be found, reports AP. In a statement issued from Portugal where he is on vacation, the secretary-general said he hoped violence and strife would be avoided and that the coup would not derail the process of democracy in Eastern Europe. "Given the heightened tension today," Perez de Cuellar said, "I must urgently appeal to all leaders in the Soviet Union to exert the maximum restraint so that a peaceful and constitutional solution can be found to the present crisis facing their country and people." UN officials said there has been no call for a Security Council meeting since the Soviet situation still is considered strictly an internal affair. The UN Charter prohibits its involvement in domestic matters. A self-declared eight-man State Committee on the State of Emergency deposed Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev on Monday. Two coup leaders were reported Tuesday to be ill and no longer functioning as members of the ruling junta, and third reportedly has resigned. Moscow's deputy mayor said he had been told Gorbachev is under arrest.

All roads to Crimea dacha blocked Gorbachev, Raisa arrested as Yanayev's takeover rejected

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Mikhail S. Gorbachev was arrested at his vacation retreat in the Crimea on Monday as he prepared to board his presidential airliner to fly to Moscow, deputy Moscow mayor Sergei Stankevich said Tuesday, reports AP. Gorbachev was removed from the presidency by hardliners who announced on Monday that he was ill. But Stankevich told a rally outside the Russian parliament building in Moscow that "President Gorbachev, the legitimate president of the country, was removed from his position by forcible methods, against his will, and is being held by force." Stankevich called it "the most serious crime against the state." In remarks broadcast by the independent radio station Moscow Echo, Stankevich appealed for information on the whereabouts of Gorbachev and his immediate entourage of advisers and secretaries. Officials of the Emergency Committee that replaced Gorbachev have said that he was undergoing medical treatment, but have not disclosed where and have not produced medical evidence. Several versions of the events have surfaced in the

confusion since the coup. The premier of Estonia told his republic's official radio and television that he learned from a "well-informed source" that Gorbachev had been arrested at Vnukovo Airport, one of Moscow's three main airports, after he refused to sign a decree turning power over to Gennady Yanayev, his vice-president, who has taken power. Estonian Premier Edgar Savisaar said Gorbachev's wife, Raisa, and close aides were arrested with him. Stankevich gave a different version, and said the information was provided by reliable sources in the military. The reformist Moscow city government has been cultivating ties with radicals within the military. The deputy Moscow mayor said Gorbachev had been arrested in the Crimea with aides Gen. Vladimir T. Medvedev, his chief of security, diplomatic adviser Anatoly Chernyavov, and long-time adviser Georgy Shakhnazarov and his family. At 4 am on Monday, the day of coup, the commander of the Soviet Air Defense Forces, Col. Gen. Igor Maltsev, ordered two heavy tractors parked on the runway in the Crimea where Gorbachev had sum-

moned his Tu-134 airliner and an Mi-8 helicopter to carry him to Moscow, Stankevich said. Gorbachev had planned a Kremlin ceremony on Tuesday to sign a Union Treaty that would cede much of the central government's powers to the 15 member republics of the Soviet Union. Stankevich said a local unit of the KGB scaled off the area around Gorbachev's dacha in the Crimea, and that air land and sea approaches to the coastal area had been blocked. The KGB allowed Gorbachev's airliner to take off at 7:38 pm on Monday, and it flew to Vnukovo Airport, Stankevich said. The KGB ordered the helicopter flown to an air-base in southern Russian, he said. He quoted Maltsev as saying that some Gorbachev associates had tried to contact the leader in the Crimea since the coup, and warned them not to try again. "There have been attempts to break through to Gorbachev by people from the former president's entourage, I order that in case such attempts are repeated, such persons be apprehended and handed over to KGB organs," Stankevich quoted Maltsev as saying.

Ukraine cancels orders, decisions of new regime

MOSCOW, Aug 21: The parliamentary leadership of the Ukraine declared on Tuesday that orders and decisions by the new hardline Kremlin leadership were null and void on the republic's territory, local journalists said, reports Reuter. They said 15 of the 25 members of the presidium including Chairman Leonid Kravchuk, a leading candidate for Ukrainian president in elections in December, supported the resolution. The decision deals a serious blow to the emergency committee's bid to win full control of the Soviet Union.

Changes won't affect ties, says Nepali PM

KATHMANDU, Aug 21: New developments in the Soviet Union should not affect existing Nepalese-Soviet relations, Prime Minister Gijrja Prasad Koirala told parliament here Tuesday, reports AFP. As a government committed to human rights, we can only hope that the process of democratization and respect for human rights will not be obstructed by the ouster of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Koirala said. Describing the ouster as "a serious matter," Koirala said reforms initiated by Gorbachev "had earned appreciation among the nations of the world." They helped achieved international understanding, the reduction of nuclear weapons and made progress towards world peace," he added.

No major movement of troops, say US officials

WASHINGTON, Aug 21: US officials have seen neither major movements of Soviet troops into Moscow nor large shifts of troops into the Baltic republics, a senior administration official said Tuesday, reports AP. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the three major divisions seen in the Moscow area are stationed in or near the city, and none appears to have been brought into the city. The units that have been observed in the Baltic regions also appear to be those usually garrisoned in the republics, he said. "There is not a lot of movement in general," the official said of the military situation. "We've seen no major (troop) movements." That means the vast majority of the Soviet Union's estimated 5 million military personnel apparently have yet to be drawn into the coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The three divisions seen inside Moscow are a quick reaction division, a mechanized infantry division and a tank division, the official said. Elements of the quick reaction force and the mechanized infantry are the ones that have declared their support for Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, the official said.

LONDON, Aug 21: The Soviet military could split over the overthrow of President Mikhail Gorbachev if the new Kremlin rulers cannot control rank-and-file troops, western military analysts said on Tuesday, reports Reuter. Although the vast bulk of the four-million-strong Armed Forces have remained loyal, a handful of soldiers supported Russian President Boris Yeltsin's resistance to the takeover. "There's a very distinct possibility that the attitude of the Armed Forces is divided on this," said Donald Kerr, a military analyst, with the private think-tank control risks. But there was no other im-



MOSCOW: A slightly wounded and exhausted soldier sits on the turret of his tank after crushing the bus set up as a barricade near the Russian Parliament building August 21. — AFP/UNB photo

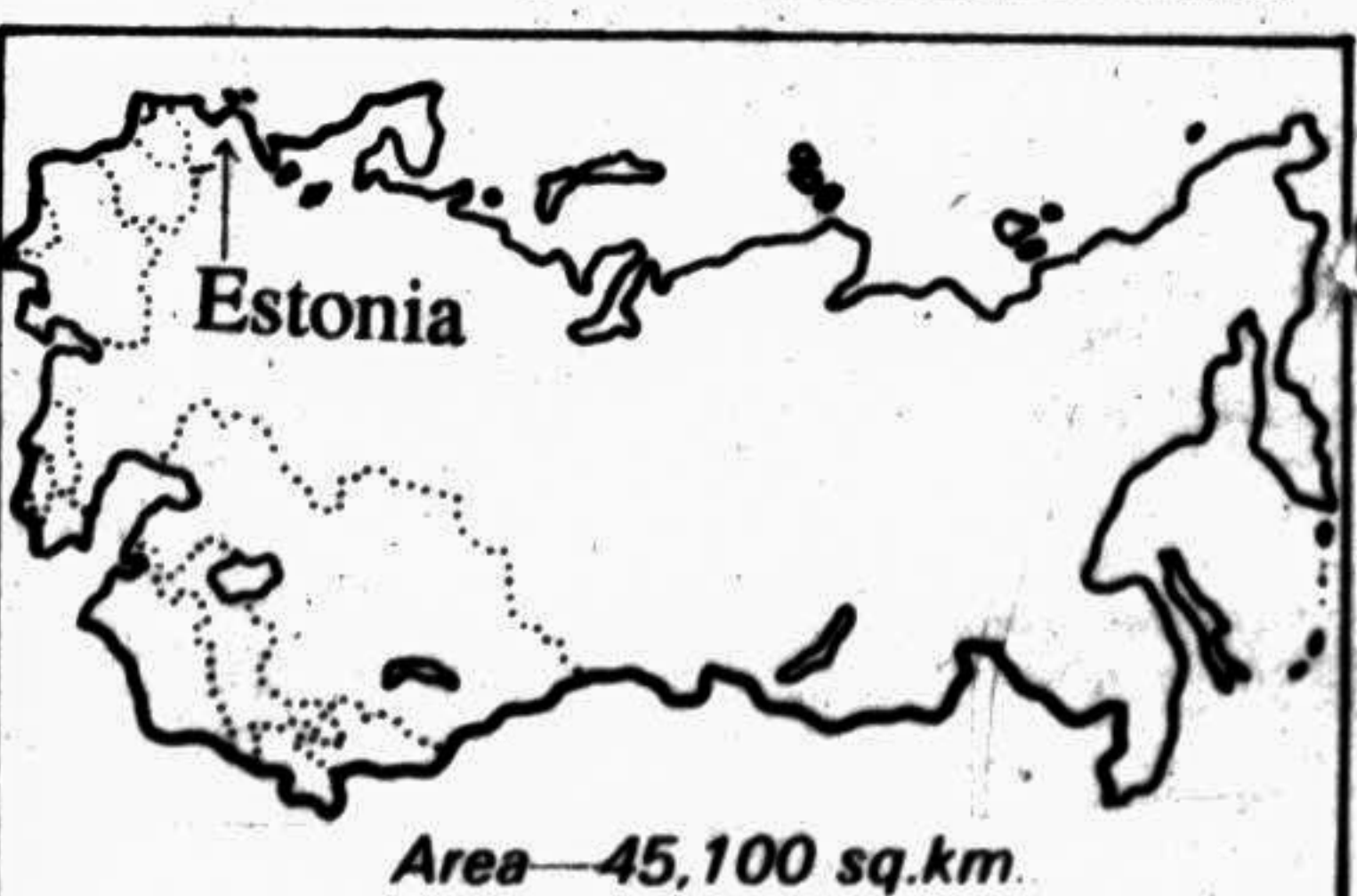
2 issues of Izvestia carry neutral reports

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Two issues of the Soviet government daily Izvestia appeared here Tuesday, one of them a day late, and carried neutral reports of events in the capital, reports AFP. Typesetters at the newspaper walked off the job on Monday after editors refused to run in full a statement issued by Russian President Boris Yeltsin. In the end, the newspaper published most of Yeltsin's statement and Monday afternoon's paper appeared here Tuesday morning. Tuesday's issue appeared as usual, later in the day. The newspaper reported on negative reactions abroad to the over-thrown early Monday of President Mikhail Gorbachev, including statement by US President George Bush, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and top NATO officials. numbers were important. "You could have a few mavericks in any community. If there are more than that going over to Yeltsin, then it seems to me the coup can't hold," she said. Kerr said the totalitarian nature of the Soviet military could encourage a split. "The Soviet conscript seems to be unskilled, poorly motivated in professional terms but subjected to an excess of political indoctrination," he said. "There is always a division between the conscript and the real soldier, the career soldier. Unless it is controlled this can be quite decisive."

Estonia declares independence

Tallinn (Soviet Union), Aug 21: The Parliament in the breakaway Baltic republic of Estonia declared immediate full independence on Tuesday and said Parliamentary Elections would be held in 1992 on the basis of a new constitution, reports Reuter. In a late night session in the barricaded Parliament building in Tallinn's old town, deputies voted unanimously for the declaration, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Eve Tarm said.

Estonia, which like the two other Baltic republics was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, last year declared sovereignty and said it was entering a transition phase — including talks with the Kremlin — which would eventually lead to independence. But deputies said on Tuesday the overthrow of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev by right-wingers on Monday meant the republic could not restore its pre-war independence through talks with the central authorities.



Soviet envoy in Prague declares loyalty to Gorbachev

PRAGUE, Aug 21: Soviet Ambassador to Czechoslovakia Boris Pankin has dissociated himself from his country's new leadership and declared his loyalty to ousted President Mikhail Gorbachev, Czechoslovak radio reported today, reports Reuter. Speaking to the state news agency CTK late on Tuesday, Pankin denounced what he termed barbarous acts by the emergency committee which took power in the Soviet Union on Monday. "Those who promised to save the country from a civil war have themselves dragged the people in it," Pankin was reported as saying.

Changeover puts 74-yr old Army loyalty to CP on trial

Yeltsin called on the military to defy the new hardline communist rulers. He was supported by elite troops from the Taman Division, who often lead processions on official occasions and on Monday rolled 10 T-72 tanks onto the grounds of the Russian Parliament. Paratroopers from another division south of Moscow followed suit. Western analysts said however that the takeover by an

mediate sign that the military's 74-year-old loyalty to the Communist Party was in danger. Senior officers anticipated complete obedience, and Colonel Valery Ochirov, head of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee, said: "I exclude the danger of a split."

Schofield, who spent more than two years studying the Soviet military for her book "Inside the Soviet Army," said