

## **Diary of a Conference in Moscow March 1991**

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### **Abstracts**

This article is a reprint of historian Norman Saul's diary and offers a vivid, firsthand account of his experiences during a March 1991 conference in Moscow, set against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's transition from communism to a market economy. The text captures both the personal and professional dimensions of the journey, reflecting on the practical challenges of daily life, the political climate surrounding Gorbachev's referendum, and the dynamics of academic exchanges. Saul's observations illuminate the tensions of a society in flux, blending anecdotal detail with broader commentary on Russian-American relations and the evolving roles of historical scholarship amid systemic upheaval.

[Author's note: The original was written in ball point pen on a yellow, lined notepad as time allowed during a March 1991 conference in Moscow. I was using the opportunity of attending the conference to do additional archival research on Russian-American relations. It is presented here as written with only minor editing. I should also remind any reader that this was the spring before the August Coup and during a time of chaotic transition of Russia from Communist dictatorship to a pluralistic society and a free market economy. It featured Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to keep the Soviet Union together by means of a voter referendum.

## **Diary of a Conference in Moscow March 1991**

### **Norman Saul**

#### **Moscow, March 8, 1991**

I thought I would start a journal—see how far it would go... It is 9:00 p.m. and I am in my room at the Akademicheskaya watching the evening news, "Vremia".

V met me at the airport—the Pan Am plane came in with a smooth landing after a direct flight, with two delays, from New York. The first big delay was that large planes were occupied in bringing back troops from the gulf war and the Moscow flight took low priority. The last delay was due to a decision to reload all of the baggage to ensure a correct distribution of weight. The plane was less than half full, so I had three seats to stretch out in. There were a couple of small tourist groups and sixteen St. Louis University boys high school students coming to spend a month living with Soviet families and to go to school. I don't think they knew what they were in for. But they were accompanied by a pleasant, older teacher, a distinguished bearded man who seemed to be experienced. He knew Russian. They (the students) said they had three years of Russian in school, but equivalence seemed to me to one college semester.

Relatively simple getting through Customs though a long line—saved a lot by not checking baggage. None of my communications got through, but V, through his own channels, pressed Pan Am to find out when I was coming but was not informed correctly of change in time of arrival, so had to make two trips.

I am in Korpus 1 of the Akademicheskaya, overlooking Leninskii Prospect and Otkribriskaia Ploshchad—rather noisy. Normally, foreign guests are put up in Korpus 2, which is behind this building and where we went to register. I have a single room, that is, no sharing of bath. It smells and looks dirty, but the tub seems clean—mainly smell of cigarette smoke that never goes away—Russian style. V and I tried to eat in the restaurant but all was reserved, which may be true, considering it is Saturday night, but V says Moscow is one vast black market and one must pay extra for everything. We went to the buffet instead and found the place empty and an assortment of cold foods—piroshki, a jellied meat, salat, tea, coffee, all reasonably priced. Too late we learned they also had hot beef stroganov that seemed good—as other people came in. I will be in this building for 3-4 days, until space opens in the other one. I am to pay 30 rubles a day until the conference starts. He thinks about 10 Americans are coming—including LaFerber and Bailyn but also

some French, Czechs, etc.—so a fairly large meeting. He also says everything is cleared for archives and will take me over there Monday morning. [the archives of the foreign policy of imperial Russia is within walking distance of the hotel]

I am watching the return of Kuwaitis and journalists from Iraq just now on the news. Also quite a bit earlier on the upcoming referendum on the Soviet Union, interviewing people on the street. Soviet news seems to be coming down hard on Saddam Hussein today (according to V, who says he and his friends have relished and applauded every American military success. Plenty of hot water, so I had a nice tub shower (no stopper of course—nor soap, but I have some from the airplane). The television is a small, old, rather battered black and white. Before the news there was a film set in the 20s in Russia that featured an American mobster type with a huge machine gun, a cabaret with nude dancers, a bicycle race, etc. Also an ad to subscribe to... to the British ITV channel. Vladimir said he had just purchased a device to receive and is subscribing to CNN. I am in pajamas but I think I will go over to the other building to see if my passport is ready. The “service bureau” is there and open till 11:00. It is not clear when I am to pay. The “news,” which seems to be an hour long—film about JFK. Well, the bureau was closed but opens again at 8:00. I guess I will have a quiet evening in the room

[list of telephone numbers, omitted]

Coming in from the airport the area was covered with snow but in the it is hard to see and dirty. A long line at MacDonalds. There goes my Big Mac. There is now a Jazzy program on TV—sort of a Saturday Night Live. I am now in for this night

.....spent time reading. It is 2:00 p.m. Lawrence time. But on another channel naked young women at the seashore! This could be a nice room but it has the dingiest, dirtiest wall paper you can imagine—and it is peeling, but lace curtains and a Chinesey chandelier, and smells. No rug, rough parquet floor, desk with lamp,

### **Sunday morning, March 10**

Well, I got a few hours sleep, 11:30 to 3:30, then alternately read and rested. It is now 8:00 and I will try the buffet on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor again shortly, then come back up for a little nap perhaps then walk around the Kremlin area, check on shop hours at the National, be back by 5:00. B. called late last night and will pick me up at 6:00 for dinner at his house—that should be nice. Obviously V is passing my phone number around. [One convenience of Soviet hotels is that the phone numbers have direct access outside, not through a hotel switchboard]

This is a long three-day weekend, the 8<sup>th</sup> being a holiday—women’s day. I had forgotten that. This is nothing new but goes way back before the revolution when it was celebrated widely in Europe. It was a key day in the February Revolution in Petrograd (by the Russian calendar then, March 8 fell in February). V called it a festival, also referring to Lent now being on.

It looks like a nice day—I can see the sun reflected in the window of a newish high rise across the street. A lot of busy traffic for early on Sunday morning. In unpacking found the Ms’ number.

Now I have buffeted. Pretty much the same thing as last night. Again, I learned too late about fresh cooked fried eggs—will save that for tomorrow. Buffets, I believe, and the buildings that they are in, must be rated on the basis of the way tea is served. Last time at the Academy of Sciences it was served with a tea bag, hot water from a samovar, and a neatly wrapped package of sugar. Here, the old-style glass filled with coarse sugar and tea poured into it from an old-fashioned kettle. I must remember not to stir it—a second one in the same glass was quite decent. What do you want for 5 kopecks (less than one cent)?

Today a five percent sales tax goes into effect, according to a sign I read. I picked up my passport that was registered from the other building. There was a one-and-a-half ruble service charge. I had no change but two-ruble notes were offered—was not offered

any change, was told it was “OK”! The news stand in the lobby was well stocked with the weekly apartment exchanges. May have to get one. I saw a Mickey Mouse comic book in Russian—on the front—it said it was published as a joint venture with a Danish company! No royalties for Walt Disney I assume.

The militsiia (traffic police) seem to be out in force—yesterday and today—for the holiday. Three big ones were in the buffet on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor for a hot meal—obviously just off the street. That reminds me that last night I saw an elderly woman trying to hold up and steer an obviously drunk man on the street. Some things don’t change. There is now a rationing of vodka again—one bottle a month but I understood that it was mainly because of an acute bottle shortage. In the buffet nothing available in bottles—no mineral water, Pepsi, or lemonade—all available last time—but in the corner are four tall stacks of cases full of empty bottles! I wonder how long they have been there.

Have had my afternoon outing (Sunday)—Metro to the Kremlin area and had planned to exit on Marx Prospekt near Natsional but police had closed it, ended up near Red Square and Bolshoi Theatre. A huge demonstration was taking place opposite the Natsional. I threaded my way through it. Polite, good humored crowd—many thousand. I could make out some of the speeches. Lots of blue, white, and yellow flags. Too packed around hotel to get in but it looked closed. Went on to Kremlin. Walked around the familiar sights, few people there. Day was sunny but hazy, about 35 degrees.

I then walked past Lenin Library to the Arbat—what a sight! This is the old street that is now closed to traffic as a kind of artists’ mall. Both sides, and some in the middle were lined with small stands selling lacquered boxes, matroshkas, icons, paintings, eggs, carved things, jewelry, etc. In one block I saw more of these things than in all previous visits, and it went on for blocks—art in the park several times over. A nice jazz combo at one end playing Saints and Glen Miller. Lots of people—half way down I encountered a long line and at the other end of it? Baskin-Robbins. I passed it up. But there was also another popular one called “Pinquin”, Italian ices.

There was such a maze of tourist stuff I would not know where to begin or what to trust, must to have been hundreds of matroshkas. 3 x 5 nice lacquered boxes for 750 rubles (\$100 at tourist rate), a brooch for 150 rubles. Quite a bit of ceramic stuff and samovars, new and old. Most sellers were young—on my passage along the whole street, I saw only a couple of sales, mainly lace. I was tempted by two nice old women selling white mohair shawls, but I only had fifty rubles with me. I may go back next Sunday. Time for a rest. The Metro worked fine, but seemed dingier, price still 5 kopecks (a fraction of a penny).

### **Monday, March 11**

One more night. I seem to be able to sleep only in 3-hour blocks, one at the beginning, one at the end. I have had breakfast at the buffet. My hopes of iatsnitsa (fried eggs) were dashed when the buffetchik shook her head and pointed to two remaining hard boiled in a bowl. I took one. Five minutes later, when the last hard-boiled egg was gone, fried eggs were suddenly available. Had to get rid of the hard-boiled eggs first? Or I am not her favorite. Had my first this time Soviet coffee—served like the tea with lots of sugar in the bottom—and no milk.

Last night was interesting. B came to the hotel, not as I was expecting, by car—which was “na remont”, but by Metro—so we set off that way—a long ride to Timiriazhev Station, which had just opened this weekend (the whole line), so B was unsure of his way. Long escalator out—new but already dirty. Then a longish fifteen-minute walk in the twilight over an icy, irregular path to his house.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately I had worn my good leather shoes! House was warm and cozy. Liuda called it “familiar.” Met her best friend, Natasha, a pleasant white-haired woman, and Kolya’s sister, perhaps a little younger. While they prepared dinner B took me upstairs to his study for a “business talk”. Says he is impressed

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<sup>1</sup> This was his father’s house that was built from sections of peasant houses brought in to land of the Timirazev Institute, where he worked.

with my paper and wants to publish it—for money this time. Other one not out yet, proofs expected during conference. He wants me to be the first non-Soviet consulting editor of *Amerikan Ezhegodnik*. We also talked about the archives project—wants it to be between him and me. He is better fixed to go with it because he can simply assign staff to it. We talked about financing and calling Pat Grimstead.

Dinner was very pleasant. Good wine, zakuskis, tasty baked chicken legs with roasted potatoes. An apple pie—really a cake with merange on top and apricot reserves. Apples from his garden, apricots from Ukraine. I suspect the other ladies had helped prepare the food, concluded Bs like wine (bring bottle of wine next time but no vodka).

The conference is to be a big affair—about 15 Americans, including Dymytryshyn (Arizona), Pearson (Portland), LaFeber (Cornell), Bailyn, etc. most I do not know. Meals provided at Academy, reception for Americans at B's home (something different), concluding banquet and Bolshoi theatre. We will see how much of this comes off. Must get ready for the archives (Monday morning) and meeting V. A dull grey sky—like the city beneath it! The sweater idea for the archives was silly. I need the jacket pockets. Next time bring soap powder, basin stopper...

Back in the room at 4:20 eating a warm cheese pie—which must be a Soviet pizza—from kiosk at Metro. Quite filling, will be a nice fill in snack. Spent a couple of hours in Archives going over inventories and filling out orders but will be tomorrow afternoon before I can see anything—not surprised. The building is a new one but near the old one which has been torn down. Nice reading room, only a couple of people working there. Went from there down to National—as I suspected, it was closed. So went next door to Intourist—not much of a berezka there. At a sitdown garden café I had a Heinikin (hard currency only), priced a small bottle of Scotch at \$27 and passed it up, but bought a bottle of Evian for a dollar. Walked across Red Square, admiring the vista. The place was awfully quiet—few people. Went in the far side of GUM and walked through the upper level—quite a few people there. Biggest lines were for a cosmetic kit (lipstick, finger nail polish, mascara) in a plastic bag, and for toilet paper. Latter was only 35 kopecks a roll and people were buying lots—8-10 rolls. A small Benneton, just outside the door, had a sign “30% off, hard currency.”

From GUM I strolled back by the ghostly Natsional and through some small streets with plaques of historical people—very 19<sup>th</sup> century. All of Moscow—save Kremlin and churches—was destroyed in 1812. Then up Kalinin Prospekt to Dom Knigi. Several people outside with a number of expensive items—a book in Russian on marketing, a dictionary of American idioms, then back to Arbat. Surprised to find at stands there with few people. Stores in Arbat were open today—antiques, souvenirs, art items. In stores, prices are marked.

Around Arbat Metro station stands were selling semi-pornographic literature, news sheets and pamphlets. I saw a large calendar in Russian featuring a woman wearing only the bottom of a string bikini, was a popular item. Returned via Metro. After writing some cards went out again (5:00) to mail them and walked up Leninskii Prospekt. The store nearest the hotel, where I have bought things before had some nice, old looking Palek boxes, one large one for 2700 rubles (\$350 by official exchange rate). Plenty of plastic bags—one in old Cyrillic pictured the Last Supper. One thing that seemed to be in abundance, surprisingly, here and at GUM, was disposable razors—Bic and Schick—and only 35 kopecks (5 cents) for a package of five. Also plenty of soap. I looked at a couple of food stores—pretty bare. Again, nothing in bottles, but lots of eggs, some poor-quality meat, no cheese or potatoes, lots of long cucumbers. At a kiosk outside brisk sales of lettuce. There seems to be no morozhenoe in town except at Baskin-Robbins and Pinquin in Arbat.

Mineralnyi voda appeared in the buffet tonight, so got two bottles. Met a young man from San Francisco, here to set up Peace-net, a computer network between US and USSR. I was interested in how historians could tie in. Called Khrushchev, talked with Valentina, Sergei at the dacha, may call later, wanted me to come out to dacha for weekend, but have promised Saturday night to V. K. called, will pick me up at Metro to go to his apartment

on Wednesday at 5:00. I would guess we have cucumbers—they seem to be everywhere—even in buffet! (The goulash there was not bad.). I passed up USA Today (Friday's) at Intourist for \$2. Noticed a *Family Circle* and a *Mother Jones* and a New Testament. The contrasts and contradictions are at times mind-boggling.

There was a marvelous scene in Dom Knigi today—in one section two tables and shelves faced each other. On one side a sign said “Books about Lenin,” on the other a newish sign, “Religion.” Not a sole looking at books on Lenin, a crowd around religion. Went by again 15 minutes later—same thing! I also noticed a number of religious books in the old book section. Outside at a kiosk large bibles were selling for 100 rubles. I bought a nice book for Alyssa, “Tales of a Naturalist”, translated from Russian, published here and only 95 kopecks. I plan to take it easy tomorrow, go to the Archives at 1:00.

## Tuesday, March 12

9:00—A good night's sleep, so maybe I am on Russian schedule now. I have the morning to kill, which I will do right here in the “comfort of my room,” which was quite cold when I got up this morning but now seems to be gradually warming up. I sprinkled some shaving lotion around so odors are not so noticeable (bring air freshener next time).

I have breakfasted at the buffet; someone should do a book on “Buffet Russia”, its patrons and personnel, with advice as to how to master them. A 30ish, stocky, heavily made-up, but not unattractive woman runs this one, at least in the mornings. She is really quite efficient and the line moves quickly. When I asked for fried eggs, she quickly asked the next person if he wanted them too, so she could do both at once. Nice to get them fresh cooked. The fare this morning was eggs, hard boiled or fresh fried (a choice this time), cucumbers (I gather you had to buy a whole one), cold cooked chicken (only hindquarters), tomatoes (whole), and sweet, stale pastry and, of course, bulochki (round rolls), also stale.

There is always a struggle for change after she “rings” it up on an abacus (that reminds me that one thing I saw on the Arbat the other day was a nice, fancy abacus). I think that if she had a plate full of small change she would still try to get you to pay with exact change, but the shortage of change is real. The cheap aluminum forks and spoons are there, but knives only on request. There are a small number of tables and chairs which however prove so far to be sufficient—eating silently with strangers—no one dallies. Everyone was having eggs, some three instead of the usual two. I forgot there was also some smoked fish left over from last night. No pepper in sight, but salt on each table. A 30ish young woman, also stocky, but without make-up was in charge of washing, or I should probably say “rinsing” dishes. They are not dried—and constantly in circulation. A real rush might produce a jam up as one would have to wait for another person to finish in order to have a plate. They come in various styles, sizes, and condition. Perhaps the miracle is that they always seem to have some food though the stores around here are nearly empty. I saw a nicely dressed older man fill his briefcase with food at the buffet, apparently to take home.

V said that the cost of living has nearly doubled in the past year, mainly for the extra that must be paid to get things outside the official stores. While salaries have gone up (his by a third, T's has doubled). He has just recently raised what he charges for tutorials. Yesterday near the archives I saw a large bulletin board covered with advertisements, the kind you see around KU with little slips with telephone numbers to tear off. Most were advertising various tutoring services, common for young people preparing for university entrance exams and from which V and his wife earn extra incomes (or it could be their primary incomes).

Clothing in stores is quite shabby and cheap looking and few are buying. Perhaps inventories are being run down in anticipation of big price increases coming in a week or so. I have seen a number of beggars, usually old women in Metro passageways, one pathetic one with a small child in the passage into Red Square yesterday. Quite a few people stopped to drop in coins, however. The Metro works, though the cars are the same and showing age. I have never had to wait more than two minutes for a train. Yesterday on the koltso (circle ring) they were running one minute apart—one begins to get antsy about

that. And not as crowded as I expected—usually a seat is available if I want it—but this is not rush hour and I walk to the archive. I have not tried busses since the Metro is much faster.

There seem to be a lot more dogs now. In B's area everyone seems to have one or two. In that area of dachas (B's first floor is built of logs, upper regular siding). It was built in the 1920s for faculty of an agricultural institute nearby. His father worked there (his grandfather was a prominent merchant in Voronezh province to the south of Moscow before the revolution). A nice winding path, surrounded by birch and pine trees, leading to B's house, was called "Professors' Path", but now is referred to as "Dogs' Path"! B's dog is a large mongrel, rather old, with a loud bark to greet every stranger (which is what it is for I guess), otherwise friendly. I do not see many cats but they are probably kept indoors. One nice looking kitten was incongruously parked at the top of an escalator in a busy Metro station, perhaps for sale. I assume it belonged to someone who works there.

I read part of B's paper which will kickoff the conference. It is quite a blockbuster! It pulls no punches in vilifying how Soviet scholars have distorted American history—and are still doing it! Someone (V?) said that Shevardnadze may attend opening session. Stankevich, the young deputy mayor of Moscow, is also on program, along with other liberal types. B has asked if I would respond—among others—to his paper. If this turns out, I will need to be careful.

6:00 in the evening, back from the archive—4 hours in, but the open hours are limited, so that will cut me back. For future reference: 9:30-5:00 MTh; 9:30-3:00 WF. I suppose I should be going to the Lenin Library to work in the evenings, but I don't feel much up to the trek in the dark. The path to the archive is one of the grimmest and most depressing, roughly 7 blocks, a ten-minute walk, but fortunately in daylight. A lot of good stuff there—would take two months to do what I want to do. I found one interesting letter of Thomas Cottman of Louisiana, who was important during the Crimean War (1855) in Russia but then dropped out of sight and I never found any letters. Well, here was one written in 1871 from New York to the Russian Minister in Washington recounting his earlier exploits. An added note said he was writing on his son's stationery, another Thomas Cottman, who was an attorney in NY—that threw me off at first. Nice people at the Archive, try to be helpful, wish they were open more hours.

On the way back, I had a tasty pirog from a stand and found some regular Soviet ice cream, so things do change. Everyone says stores are empty—and they are compared to ours—but everyone is walking around with their bags full! I looked in at the neighborhood store. The big thing was toothpaste. Not a big line but it was moving fast, people buying 8-12 tubes, a year's supply—or to share with friends and relatives. I have a feeling it would not take a lot to bring the market out of scarcity for key items—like those Bic disposable razors everywhere. Probably everyone in Moscow and beyond now has a year's supply!

In the store two women were standing, looking bored with nothing to do in a dismal, sparse clothing section, while right next to them were two more women working their tails off with the toothpaste! Does anyone here know anything about managing a store? Cucumbers reached the street stands today. I suppose they will be gone tomorrow. But where did a million cucumbers come from all at once? Guess what's for dinner tonight? I've seen quite a few street cosmetic stands, the other end of the Gypsy mafia operation I'm told. And also all of these people standing around in the cold with a few books or matroschkas in front of them. Or flowers—nice tulip buds, carnations, etc., but not cheap—15-20 rubles for three. Sometimes it seems there are as many people selling things in a given outdoor space as people looking or buying. What a waste of everyone's time.

Even in the archives, people seem to come and go, only putting in a couple of hours. I guess that's why the limited hours are of little concern to most of them. Women sitting in a morozhenoe kiosks with a sign in front of them that says "net morozhenoe". At least saves people the time of asking. So the sun has set on another grey day in Moscow.

8:30 p.m. Something new in the buffet—sosiski (sausage), cabbage, and beet salad—and kifir! It comes in liter cartons, so I got one, only 50 kopecks—much more like buttermilk

than I remembered. It says fruity on it but I can't taste any fruit, and I did shake it up. It seemed to be going in a hurry, most people taking 2 or 3. The buffet crowd seems to be quite international tonight. An Englishman at another table. The person at mine appeared Mongolian; at another Vietnamese or Chinese (does not know Russian), and a German.

I guess the kifir will keep for a day. There is a small refrigerator in my outer room—where tub and toilet are, but I have not figured out how to work it, my guess is that it doesn't. It smells inside anyway. No call yet from Bob, said he would call last night.

7:40 a.m. Not a good night, not much sleep—and I thought I was adjusted—to the bathroom several times. Maybe too much kifir. Or all of those calls last night M. called and we had a long chat. She is going to Leningrad Saturday so I probably will not see her. Another grey day, around 33 degrees, wet streets but does not seem to be raining—a little drizzle maybe.

Bob is now on the TV (8:15) talking about how the West is looking at the referendum, more generally on US interest in USSR, about his most recent visit and his work on Eisenhower, etc. He says people should vote for referendum, for the union, as the best choice, that to vote "no" would be voting for civil war.

#### **Thursday, March 14**

9:00 a.m. Another grey day, a little snow has fallen. It was a very interesting evening at the K's. He met me at the hotel, then by Metro to Sokolniki. We walked through part of Sokolniki Park, past the big Ferris Wheel that we all rode many years ago. Nice in the twilight with those big, noisy birds, birches, new snow and icy paths. Their apartment was very nice and spacious and well furnished. Large entryway, where I changed to slippers provided, bath and toilet on left, full size kitchen on the right. At the end of the hall were two nice size rooms, one was Gennady's study, nicely furnished, the other a living-dining room, again rather spacious. In between the kitchen and the living room must have been the bedroom, which I did not see. There were two stoves, one electric, one gas, both with ovens. It was explained that electric blackouts were not uncommon. Gennady's wife, Vera, was very nice, well-groomed with a polished, sophisticated air... She has recently retired as a computer engineer (although Gennady said optical engineer, maybe both).

We had quite a feast: four different kinds of salad—cabbage and beet, lettuce and sour cream, cucumber and something else, and an interesting, very good congealed fish, salmon I think, covered with sprinkled hard cooked eggs—and freshly made hot piroshki! We had vodka and tomato juice in separate glasses, and narzan to drink, also delicious hot boiled potatoes with butter, cold ham, and then she had planned to cook pelmeni, but we were all so full, we cancelled it. And then hot tea and fresh apple pie! After that I could skip lunch today.

We also had a long lively conversation about Soviet conditions. They are definitely against the referendum. He is from Poltava in Ukraine, she from Leningrad. They insisted that I should leave the hotel and move in with them (the sofa opens up into a bed), and she also has an apartment in Leningrad that is usually empty. Whenever I (we) are in Leningrad we can stay there! The conversation was mostly in Russian with occasional clarifications in English, when my Russian broke down. I can understand better but speaking is still difficult.

The word I hear on the referendum to preserve the Union is predicted to be a 60% turn out with the vote in favor by 60%. If either are less it will be considered a defeat for Gorbachev.

Of the people I have polled: Bob —yes; G—no; N—yes; V—undecided. We also talked about salaries, universities in US, family (they have a daughter and grandson age 11. Her husband is a "market economist"; she a historian at the Academy of Social Sciences, in US history. I was given a book she published last year.

I have a sense that people who do research such as those with the academies and universities do not get such big salaries comparatively, but get better, bigger apartments (a study in lieu of an office somewhere. Anyway, I was surprised at the size and furnishings of this one. They had a washing machine in the bathroom, I noticed.



**Friday, March 14**

I had a good night's sleep. After getting home at 11:30 via metro and then a busy, productive day in the archives. The reading room, which was nearly full at one time today, is often left unattended, and sometimes I have to wait awhile for someone to come back to get more material. All the others working there seem to be Soviet scholars of various ages. The building is completely unmarked. One goes through an iron gate in back into a courtyard and finds a backdoor, then checks through with the security guard by showing a passport (my name is on a list on his desk), then up to the sixth (top) floor to the reading room where there are large desks, comfortable chairs, and those swing-levered lamps, but most people do not turn them on, preferring the dim room lights.

A little more snow this morning and colder, but then the sun broke through this afternoon. I came back to find a "maid" scrubbing the floor of the room, the first time it had been touched since I have been here. Clean towels but no sheets changed, but she got the refrigerator going. Took a walk down past Gorky Park, across the river, in the direction of the embassy—then to Progress Bookstore (books in English). Bought three more for Alyssa [she was working on an M.A. in environmental education at the time].

There is a craze of funny games on the street, i.e. games of chance. There is a state lottery, but also a lot of local, private ones—like pay to scratch off a ticket and win or most often lose; numbers games punch out cards, sort of a bingo lottery, etc. I noticed on television a carbon copy of "Wheel of Fortune" called "Field of Wonder". Some differences—no Vanna White—but same idea. There seems to be one channel that is all American adventure movies, but I can't get any sound—sort of HBO? The TV seems to have a cable hook up.

V called, has been busy all day trying to track down arrival times of other visiting historians—none of them sent telegrams as requested. Some airlines will not give out information. Communication is a definite problem. One couple wired that they were cancelling because of visa problems. He was unsuccessful in getting me into Lenin Library manuscripts because it would take several days. Drinking is now a problem, that is any kind of liquid. There is nothing to eat or drink in or around the archive. Would be nice to see a coke machine! I have not seen any Pepsi; last time there was lots.

**Friday, March 15, 8:15 (the Ides).**

Buffet was dreary this morning—nothing hot but tea or coffee. I had a hard-boiled egg, stale roll, pechenie (sweet pastry, also stale, and 2 cups of weak coffee. M called last night, plans made to join her, Nina, and Olga on a foray to the Izmailovsky rynok on Saturday—to meet first car toward Lenin Library at Park Kulturny Station, 1:30, a common Soviet meeting practice. V is doing the same thing for our meeting Saturday night at Kursk station.

I've been here a week now—seems longer. Room is cold this morning—no heat. M said B missed his flight because of delays getting into Kennedy from KCI, and instead came Lufthansa through Frankfurt and arrived 6:00, about the same time I did, but obviously a more difficult routing. M and friends had to watch all the incoming flights until they found him, not an easy thing to do because of the perpetual madhouse at the Moscow airport.

6:00 p.m. Another day in the archives. It was snowing all the time I was there, but then stopped at the time it closed (about 3:00)—about 2 inches fell, very sloppy and slippery. Went down to Intourist to change money, but could not do it there—only at Rossiia! So will let that go awhile. I am living on borrowed rubles (50 from V, 100 from N). They do not respond to my hint to exchange the loan for dollars but would be happy just to give me more. It's the hotel bill I have to be prepared for (270 rubles I figure), but maybe other Americans will have surplus rubles. I was to get some for the conference but I don't know how many. The hotel is 30 rubles a night, I think, for none of the days (Academy pays for 5); that is \$5 a night by tourist exchange rate. I am eating on about 6 rubles a day (\$1), so Moscow on \$6 a day! But things are going downhill here—no hot water tonight and very little heat (30 degrees outside). Perhaps only worth \$5.

From Intourist, I went out to Novodevichi and tramped around the monastery in the snow—very nice, hardly anybody there. Looked in at the Berezhka, which is supposed to be the best in town. Still, few people, practically empty, high prices, little that is attractive. Orenburg shawls for \$40, perhaps not bad. Scotch \$14—good price. Palek boxes over 1,000.

I should make a list of things I should have brought: soap powder, more kleenex—it goes fast, toilet paper (little supplied), more bar soap (none provided), stopper for tub and basin, sweat pants and shirt for the room and sleeping on cold nights. I would like to wear sweaters during the day but I need coat pockets. Listerine. Perhaps vest sweater with pockets would do it for the archives.

TV on—I see Baker is in Moscow talking with Gorbachev. I passed up a *USA Today* at Intourist—\$2! I saw one for sale at the other building here for 2 rubles, but it was March 1 (I think I read that one). And Bush met with Mitterand today—much better world news on Moscow TV these days—but no basketball! 9:00. Quiet evening in room, heat back on, hot water vse poriadke. The main evening news, “Vremia,” comes on at 9:00, featuring tonight Gorbachev, appealing for yes vote on referendum—good performance!

Strangely, I have met no other US scholars here yet. There are usually some around—but now none in sight. At Intourist, all Russians and Germans, and the same here. Bob called with arrangements to meet on Monday for dinner with Nina at House of scholars. Also finally got through to N I (who was with us at K’s that evening) and plans for getting together next week *en famille*. Apparently, a lot of big names cancelling out of conference—I wonder why.

### Saturday, March 16

A quiet morning in room, writing cards and reading. Went to meet M at Metro station but only Bob and Nina came. They said M called at last minute to say she was too busy. So the three of us went to Izmailovsky Park. This is the big flea market of Moscow. Lots of things from old icons and samovars, lacquered stuff, matroshkas (even plain un painted ones), many hand made things, old coins and stamps, paintings, carvings, old pictures and frames, cameras, etc. It operates on weekends. Quite extensive, prices much lower than on Arbat. Saw, or rather heard, other Americans there. Nina says price doubles if English is spoken. She was shopping for things for Olga to take to Luxembourg/Belgium next week. It was very wet from melting snow and cold out there. My feet got quite wet and cold—but and interesting excursion. At the market we had some very good shashlik—fresh lamb cooked on a spit over charcoal. V is coming by the hotel for me—so I need to get ready.

### Sunday, March 17

9:30 A bright sunny and probably cold day. Spending the morning in the room—I may be changing rooms today—and trying to ward off a cold. I have had plenty of exposure! Last night at V’s was very pleasant. They live in a newish apartment building in an old section of the city (near the old German quarter) about 15 minute walk from Kremlin. Nice, small apartment, which they own, bought 15 years ago for about 1800 rubles, a cop, now worth at least 60,000, perhaps 100,000 because of it being close to center, quiet neighborhood, etc. T, his wife, is a specialist on Russian language, which she taught in high school for several years but now works at the Academy institute on language. She is a party member, having been voted to join when she was a teacher—now resists joining the flood out of the party.

Low table in dining/living room was set with zakuskies, featuring a delicious fish salad (salmon), a smoked fish from Caspian, and olives, pickles and the orange (osetrina) caviar on bread. They apologized for no better! The next course was that mushroom dish I had before—mushrooms, sour cream, onions, and herbs cooked in small pans with handles—quite delicious and filling, sort of a thick soup, called “julienne.” Main course later was pork cutlets and mashed potatoes and slaw. Desert was cake, fresh grapes, and tea and sweet wines. One of the latter was a rare atar of Abkazia, a section of Georgia, made from small, black grapes called Isabella. It was poured from a cut glass flask that belonged

to V's grandfather and was returned to the family after he was killed at the front in 1916. I drank from the silver cup top, as suggested by V. Throughout the meal a nice view over old Moscow from the window (8<sup>th</sup> floor) with a large baroque church being restored. They sent me home with a nice doggy bag, which will keep me going today: grapes, caviar sandwiches!, and cake. Spent an hour also back in the room writing out my comments on B's paper, making them very general.

I walked up to the Donskoi Monastery this afternoon—pleasant but cold. I guess the temperature is ranging from 18 to 28 today. I then took the Metro down to the Intourist—paid \$4 for a bottle of Evian but better than the sodium laced Narzan. Back to get ready for the Kh pickup.

### Monday, March 18, 8:30

Most of the other Americans arrive today, as I would be by the first invitation and visa approval. A nice sunny day. I have heard no results of election but it did not produce much excitement. Sergei Kh did not vote.

He picked me up by car coming straight from his dacha and arriving on time. Nice, spacious apartment, that is, big rooms but I think only three: living room, bedroom, and kitchen. We ate in the kitchen—a cold supper with red and white “cheap” Italian wines (no Georgian wines in Moscow?), very much *en famille*: Sergei, Valya, his sister Liuba, her son Iuri and his wife Elena. He seemed very young, is a computer student. His wife works at *Istoricheskii Bibliotek* (Historical Library). Conversation mostly in Russian or Ukrainian, light family stuff. I could not catch all of it. Found the evening somewhat tedious. Sergei spends most of the time at the dacha, Valentina stays at the apartment but sometimes goes out for the weekend (but she was there last weekend). Strangely separated but still much time together.

Valya had recently redecorated the place rather gaudily. It is very much like a museum with many paintings on walls, large malachite boxes, Chinese vases, large pieces of cut glass, all apparently having been given to or acquired by his father, a lot of things under glass and labelled! Three sculpture items by Neizvestny (who did one for the gravesite). A highlight was being served pomegranate juice. Sister, apparently younger, teaches acting. All understood some English but did not want to speak it. Off to the archive this morning, then for dinner with Bob and Nina.

9:00 p.m. Back from dinner which was very good and pleasant. It was in *dom uchenikh* (House of Scholars), which Bob says is the best place to eat in Moscow. It is on Kropatkinskaya Street (not far from the Anglo-American school.) It is like a country club, exclusive membership, payment to join, and so much per year. They have evening programs, the one tonight was a Soviet film, “Family and Love in America.” Would have liked to see it but dinner took too long, not really that long but a lot of conversation. We had the usual *zakuski* and Pepsi for a change, very good steak and mashed potatoes. This is an old former wealthy merchant's house, recently refurbished, lots of fancy rooms with inlaid wood tables. The I's very much at home there and know a lot of people. I was introduced to the director. They plan to take me to a ballet on Wednesday if nothing else intervenes.

I have a program for the conference. Tomorrow am “an expert” at the plenary session (which means no other presentations—all join for it) for B's paper. LaFeber gives a paper there too. On Wednesday I plan to sneak off to the archives. My paper is on Thursday morning. I expect to see changes though. For most of the time there are three sessions (and on Thursday I am listed to chair a session at the same time as my paper is scheduled at another session—Soviet style conference! But I have not seen the program for the foreign guests, though I have heard they are to be. B just called and wants me to give an address at the opening plenary session, since the person who was supposed to do this did not get his visa. Also to be interviewed on the main evening news! We will see. Be prepared for anything. I am listening to “Vremia” now, I am not going to sweat it. Another oddity: Nina and Bob mentioned tonight having a masseur in today to the home to give the grand baby a massage, apparently a Russian tradition and considered very important.

**Tuesday, March 19, 11:00 p.m.**

Busy day. Worked late last night on my extra presentations, then up early for the bus to the new Academy building not far up Leninsky Prospekt. Quite fancy big hall with simultaneous translation capability, fancy lighting, almost garish. The Institute of General History and North American Center are there. A Soviet scholar told me at lunch that the building, built by a Serbian company, was intended for all the high officials of the Academy, then it was discovered that the building contained much radioactivity (radon) and was given to the institutes. Institute scholars only come in twice a week and then usually only for a couple of hours.

The foreign scholars here are quite a mixed bag. Some have been here before, others have not. Some are rather distant—at least today. I like Walter LaFeber and Paul Dukes, who is from Scotland (Jay knows him well), and a pleasant chap from Nottingham. Nice guy from Georgetown U. Told me that KU got through the first round of the NCAA but plays Indiana next. A couple of couples: Jack Green and wife from Johns Hopkins, a man from City University of NY and his wife; Bradford Perkins, quite a well-known US historian; Basil Dymytryshyn and his wife are quite nice—he was on that panel at the Monterey conference about ten years ago; a nice man from Germany (here for the first time), but has been to a conference in Lawrence.

The new Academy building reminds me of MGU (the university building—high ceilings, lots of wasted space, three large assembly halls, color code, but lighter, more modern, on the Moscow River and near the Gagarin statue on Leninsky Prospekt. I was indeed interviewed by “Vremia” evening news; it comes in live at the Slavic Department at KU at noon—maybe someone saw me. Went to the opera at the Bolshoi for a new production of Tchaikovsky’s “Virgin (Maid) or Orleans”, about Joan of Arc. Very nice music, full choir, beautiful setting, closing spectacle and good seats in the orchestra of the Bolshoi—perhaps alone worth the trip! We went down by bus and back by Metro. Quite a challenge herding a bunch of people through the Metro. And quite a mob in trying to get something to eat or drink at intermission. Welcome to Moscow.

I have a lot to do tomorrow—back to the archives, proofread my article, and oh yes B wants to publish my paper here—which I will read on Thursday.

**Wednesday, March 20**

8:15 Line long at Buffet and it looked as if all they had was cold gulash, so I will make do with what I have in room.

10:30 p.m. The usual day at the archive—though more hectic as I near the end of my time here. Still quite a bit to do. At a store I pass on the way to the archive there was a very long line, longest I’ve seen since at McDonald’s the first day, but I could not see what was being sold—store had not opened yet.

I joined the group for the bus ride to B’s reception, which turned out to be quite an affair—about 25-30 people crowded into two smallish rooms with lots to eat and drink (apple and cranberry juices), pork cutlets, roast potatoes and salads, a fruit cheese and cream puffs. No tea, it took lots of glasses as it was. Kind of crowded and hot. Quite an effort by Mrs. B and friends.

They are working on the street outside tonight, which may make sleeping difficult. The room is beginning to smell like me rather than Russia; no change of linen in two weeks may be the reason. Apparently, the election results came out about as predicted but final figures will not be announced for several days. A big price increase, announced for April 2 has people worried.

**Thursday, March 21, 10:30 p.m.**

A long day at the conference. My paper was the first on the program. It seemed to be well received although it did not fit exactly the theme of the session. It was an interesting session, culminating in a woman from Crimea asking if I could get medicine for her father. I am now loaded down with mail for the US—the pony express revived.

The closing session was also interesting—some big brass—Georgi Arbatov of Institute of Institute of USA and Canada. He, I, and B were interviewed by TASS, the Soviet foreign news agency, so this may appear somewhere at home. Lots of friendly Soviets! I feel inundated and tired. Tonight was the closing banquet here at the hotel. A stand up affair with various courses served in close quarters—interesting assortment of people. I just had to back out of another K evening in order to go to N Ivanov's. I thought I had to.

**Friday, March 22, 4:30 p.m.**

Interrupted by V at the door bringing several books, more to carry. B is supposed to bring his package in the morning. Bob is coming by soon with something. I see G at six, then off to N's —the Moscow social swirl.

I got through all the material I had ordered at the Archive. No microfilming possible. Xerox copes at 24 kopecks a page, limit of 50, 3 months for delivery. I only had four pages; they did it on the spot, and no charge!

11:30 Very interesting evening. Met Nikolai and Natasha at first car Novoslobodskaja station, took street car some distance to his wife's parent's apartment. Her mother knew English fairly well, her father some. He is a diplomat, was consul-general in Berlin. Also his brother there who is a metallurgical engineer in the big industrial area in Ukraine. The grandfather, family name Berdanin?, after St. Bernard was most interesting. About 90, was Deputy Minister of Labor from 1946 to 1966—knew Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, especially Molotov, is writing his memoirs (was a member of a labor delegation to US years ago). Lots of discussion of current Soviet problems. How depressing everything is—as we sat around a small but attractive and comfortable apartment. Nikolai hopes to come to Providence (Brown) in the next year or so. They are quite a musical family. Nikolai in school was second on the accordion in an all-Moscow contest. His father-in-law plays the piano, Nikolai now the guitar. They all sang and played for me “Old McDonald's Farm,” as a nice farewell for me.

March 23, 8:15: I am all packed except for package from B who is late. We depart at 9:00, so there is still time.

END

**About the author**

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