

March 24, 1988

**Anatoly Chernyaev, Notes from a Meeting of the
Politburo**

Citation:

"Anatoly Chernyaev, Notes from a Meeting of the Politburo", March 24, 1988, Wilson Center Digital Archive, The Archive of Gorbachev Foundation, Fund 2, Apis 1. Translated by Vladislav Zubok. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/134734>

Summary:

Notes from a meeting of the Politburo regarding Nina Andreeva, a Soviet scientist and political activist who accused Gorbachev of not being true communists and abandoning the Soviet system in her essay "I Cannot Forsake My Principles."

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Discussion of the "Nina Andreeva affair"

(...)

Ligachev. Arguably, we will muddle through, will survive the attacks [in Soviet mass media], but there are socialist countries, the world communist movement -what to do about them? Would we risk breaking apart this powerful support that had always existed side by side with our socialist countries?

History has become politics and, when we deal with it, we should think not only about the past, but also about the future.

Chebrikov [KGB chairman]. There are things that should remain a secret. I would use this expression: there should be Kremlin secrets. Nobody should learn about them. A man dies and his secret dies with him. Understand? Should we turn inside out the secret that is passing away? Incidentally, we should look at the experience of other states, they take a strict approach to similar affairs. They have established time-limits: which material should be published after 30 years, which after 50 years, and some materials are sent to archives with the classification "not for publication."

...Some time ago I was in charge of the [KGB] archive. Even today I have access to it. I had to read many documents from the 1930s, even before the rehabilitation, and even before the post-war years. Those materials had a terrifying effect on me, regarding the crimes that had taken place in those years. And, of course, some perceptions had broken down; there was a breakdown of mentality. And this is not a simple thing: in someone it happens in one way, in others in other ways...

Gorbachev. I have been receiving letters where their authors write to me: you have set out to destroy what had been built by Stalin - a great state, national order. .. What I am getting I would not wish any of you to get. But I think: there are goals you believe in, [of which] you are convinced and [for which you are] prepared to go all the way, otherwise what kind of a character are you, what are you doing here? Behind you is the country, the world, and if you, like a petty soul, like a small fry to panic, to cry "wolf" and to hunker down to save your skin -then it is all over.

(...)

Shevardnadze. Primitivism, intellectual narrow-mindedness had prevented N.S. Khrushchev from implementing to the end the line of the Twentieth Party Congress [in 1956]. Primitivism and narrow-mindedness, I am deeply convinced, are bringing many socialist countries into a deadlock. Take for instance Bulgaria, take the old leadership of Poland, take the current situation in the German Democratic Republic, in Romania. Is it socialism?

I will be frank: the communist and working class movement today is in a profound crisis, in a most profound crisis. Pick any party. Therefore everything that we have been doing over here - perestroika, renewal, improvement - are revolutionary processes. In essence, they promise the rescue of socialism. And any primitive approach can kill our enlightened cause.