

December 10, 1988

Excerpts from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev

Citation:

"Excerpts from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev", December 10, 1988, Wilson Center Digital Archive, From Anatoly Chernyaev, "1991. The Diary of an Assistant to the President of the USSR" (Moscow: TERRA, 1997). Translated by Vladislav Zubok
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/134821>

Summary:

Chernyaev's diary entry on the worsening situation in the Baltics and implications for the state of the Soviet Union.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

The Baltics are in storm. In Armenia and Azerbaijan ten people get killed in one week, there is all-out nation-against-nation banditry. 50 thousand refugees, children are freezing, looted houses, terrorism in transportation, etc.

Both followers of M.S. [Gorbachev] and the Balts feel that Gorbachev is ready to go very far on the road of federalization of the Union. It is no accident that he cares to preserve common bonds of a very general nature: The October [Revolution], socialism, adherence to Lenin's choice...Everything else seems to be negotiable. But he is concerned by the reaction of the Russian component of the Union. Several times, speaking to me one-on-one, he said that [Russian] great power "undercurrents" [potenstsiz1] are "nimbling" menacingly. As to me, I believe that in Russian nationalism the prevailing trend is not towards "one and indivisible"[Russian empire], but nationalism as such: [people think] "let them, all these Estonians and Armenians, go to. Hell!"[The Russian] public seems really not to care [nachkhat], but the enemies of perestroika are creating the background noises: [crying that Gorbachev is] breaking up the Soviet Union, our great achievement...

Gorbachev asked me and, as I learned, asked Sbakbnazarov and [Alexander] Yakovlev: is it really true that the Baltic people really want to secede? I told him: I believe, they do...And he told me (does he mock me or seriously thinks so): they [the Balts] will perish, when they cut themselves off from the rest of the Union. Self-delusion and naiveté.