

A Soviet citizen views the coup from a distance

interview by: Dennis Monokroussos

Editor's note: The situation in what was the Soviet Union has changed so quickly that the following interview is somewhat dated. It is included here, in spite of recent changes, because it provides a unique perspective into life in that country as it is viewed from within.

In this day of the "expert," it can sometimes be a refreshing change to speak to someone who actually knows what he or she is talking about. I recently had the opportunity of speaking to such a person, and on a topic which many self-proclaimed "experts" seem to abound.

Evgenia Shalin, the mother of UNLV sociology professor Dmitri Shalin, is a Soviet citizen who came to visit the United States exactly one day before the coup started. While not an eyewitness to the actual coup events, her firsthand knowledge of the political climate made it a great privilege to speak to her.

Born in 1919, in the Ukraine, Shalin now resides in Leningrad and is a retired Alexander Pushkin (one of the most significant poets in the history of Russian literature) scholar. She was generous in allowing me to ask a number of questions concerning the situation in the rapidly disintegrating Soviet Union.

Y.R.: What was the mood when you left? Did anyone suspect that a coup might be imminent?

Shalin: For a long time

people were preparing for the possibility of a coup. Troops had been moving through for some time, but under the guise of performing non-military functions. Since nothing immediately



became of that, we ceased to suspect any sort of direct action. Nevertheless, there was a long-term foreboding that something would happen.

Y.R.: Who is in control? Is it Gorbachev, Yeltsin, or is it perhaps a matter of ev-

ery republic for itself? Is Gorbachev finished? He had been finished, and were it not for Bush, he probably would've been gone by now! It's as if Bush is more comfortable with Gorbachev than with Yeltsin. In terms of who's in control, it's hard to tell since I'm not there, but it seems very unstable.

"I have a very nervous, dangerous feeling"
— Eugenia Shalin

Y.R.: Is there any possibility he was behind the coup?

Shalin: Absolutely not! He looked very unhappy when he was released, and his wife had a heart attack. If he is behind anything, it is some sort of "democratic communism."

Y.R.: What do you think about Yeltsin?

Shalin: He is popular and, while with many intellectuals there is a sense of unreliability, I trust him. He seems sincere and will try to do what is best.

Y.R.: Do you think the republics will be able to maintain their independence? And what will be the political structure of the region?

Shalin: It looks like there will be some sort of economic union, not a political one, and the specifics are unclear. There is so much interdependence in the region in regard to production and supply that it makes it impossible for any kind of hard break. The idea is to decentralize, and allow for ethnic needs. Perhaps there

will be some kind of confederacy between the republics, maybe even like the United States. I think that any nation that desires political independence should be granted it, although (due to economic reasons) some won't make it.

Y.R.: What will happen between the Armenian and Azerbaijan republics?

Shalin: The situation is very much like the situation between the Arabs and the Israelis. It will be a dangerous, long term problem.

Y.R.: What should the United States do for the Soviet Union?

Shalin: Under *glasnost* many sick movements have developed, and so the United States needs to take a stand on the positive things that have happened in the Soviet Union and a strong stand against the negative things, since U.S. opinion carries weight in the Soviet Union. Additionally, U.S. training and know-how for economic development is badly needed to help us create a healthy, capitalist economy. Finally, something like the Marshall Plan (a U.N. strategy which airlifted foods and material to those in West Berlin who were being blockaded by Communist forces) would help greatly those who are most strongly experiencing the economic hardships that presently exist.

Y.R.: What do you anticipate when you go back?

Shalin: I am afraid of dumb economic plans, and starvation.

Y.R.: Is what we have heard about the new openness to religious groups accurate?

Shalin: Yes. People are searching for anything with meaning, and religion is a hope. Institutions are weakening, unemployment is up, crime is up. It is a very bad "winter of discontent." After World War II, things were ruined. I have a very nervous, dangerous feeling.

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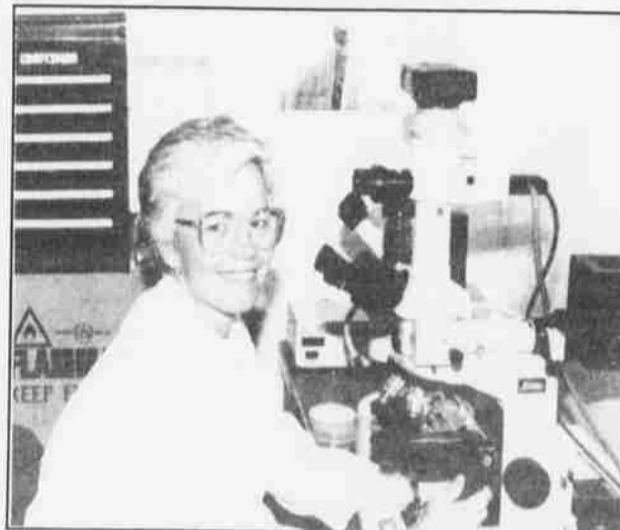
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Scientist scans the air for polluting organisms



Dr. Linda Stetzenbach photo by Morgan Fisher

by William Holt

Dr. Linda Stetzenbach deals with very small creatures.

Stetzenbach is with the Biological Sciences division of the Environmental Research Center (ERC), and she works with polluting microorganisms in the air. Her work is based on finding how airborne microorganisms have an impact on human health.

Although not commonly thought of, it is a fact that microscopic life forms are transported in the air. "They come from the outdoor air and through air vents," she said. "They are in air handling systems and can grow out of and be dispersed from carpet, draperies, furniture, plants and the occupants of rooms." These tiny organisms are the focus of Stetzenbach's study.

In this study she is assisted by Mark Buttner, who has a masters degree in biology from UNLV; Jim Meldrum, a retired Air Force and 20-year lab office research scientist with a masters degree in micro-biology; Laura Pifer, who holds a bachelor's degree in science; and engineering student Tony Cole.

While the ERC's funds come from cooperative agreements and grants from several funding agencies, 100 percent of the current microbiology projects are funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Stetzenbach explained that a lot of her research has to do with finding which microorganisms in the environment are normal and which aren't.

"Currently, there is no standard for microorganisms in indoor air," she said. The biology sciences division of the ERC would

like to be able to determine the normal flora of air content so valid assessments can be made.

The ERC laboratory also has a simulation room. Stetzenbach said scientists attempt to create an accurate measurement system by injecting fungi and bacteria into the room.

Experimental trials are run by adding or taking away all types of objects in the room, and using an empty room as a control. The ERC scientists are also using available samplers for retrieval of airborne microorganisms.

Stetzenbach gave an example of a microorganism that can be thought of as pollution called aspergillus, a naturally occurring fungus in the environment. When grown in high numbers indoors it can cause respiratory problems.

Moisture makes aspergillus grow more rapidly. "Something like a leaky roof can cause this to happen indoors," she said.

Included in Stetzenbach's studies are allergens. These include fungal spores, pet skin or saliva, house dust, mites and even cockroaches.

"When you look at environmental problems, it's not easy," Stetzenbach said. "The environment has never been a sterile one."

Stetzenbach has studied the phenomena of Sick Building Syndrome. She said in buildings with an indoor air quality problem, occupants may suffer from headaches, nausea, runny noses, itchy eyes and skin irritation.

She said reports of these problems began to surface in the 1970s, when building windows couldn't be opened due to energy costs.

Refunds are good

by William Holt

Last spring, due to the new "TOUCH Registration" system not being linked with the financial computer system, refunds were delayed.

"We did have problems cutting refund checks," said Sharon Coomes, bursar for accounts payable and refunds.

Coomes said that beginning this fall the controller's office will "upload" information from the

registration computers once a week so that they can determine which students need a refund.

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